

PARENTAL VOICE AND ITS IMPACT ON MITIGATING THE CAUSES OF STUDENT
ABSENTEEISM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON INTERVENTIONS IN URBAN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

With a

Major in Educational Leadership in the

Department of Graduate Education

Northwest Nazarene University

by

Anthony S. Felder

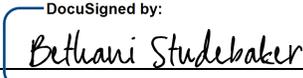
May, 2022

Major Professor: Bethani Studebaker, Ed.D

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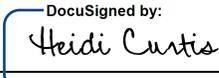
DISSERTATION

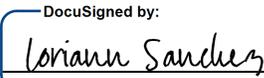
This dissertation of Anthony Felder, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership with a major in Educational Leadership and titled “Parental Voice and Its Impact on Mitigating the Causes of Student Absenteeism: A Qualitative Study on Interventions in Urban Elementary Schools,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

Major Professor 
Date 4/11/2022 | 13:37:42 MDT
DFE07B692FFB4DB... Dr. Bethani Studebaker

Committee Members 
Date 4/11/2022 | 13:52:37 MDT
449CE31FE4E54A9... Dr. Brady Dickinson


Date 4/19/2022 | 04:58:57 PDT
E019109EFA2140E... Dr. Starletta Jackson

Doctoral Program Director 
Date 4/19/2022 | 09:14:52 MDT
18C507285A124B4... Dr. Heidi Curtis

Discipline's College Dean 
Date 4/19/2022 | 09:18:08 MDT
1F6287564ACC4DC... Dr. LoriAnn Sanchez

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first would like to thank my mother, Suzanne Crutch, for shaping who I am today. She taught me how to work hard, view failure as an opportunity to learn, and always exhibit integrity. Thank you for being my mother and for loving me unconditionally.

Second, I would like to thank my aunts and grandparents for always encouraging me to pursue education. I would like to thank my family and friends for giving consistent support throughout my academic career.

Next, I would like to recognize all the friends who spoke positive words during hard times, carried me when I wanted to give up, and inspired me when I didn't want to. I could not see the road before me.

Lastly, I would like to thank my dissertation committee. Thank you, Dr. Studebaker, for your support, feedback, encouraging words, and for believing in me. You inspired me to work hard through adversity. Because of you, I hope to assist doctoral students through the research/dissertation process in the future.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Suzanne Crutch, who passed away before I completed the program. She dreamed of hearing my name called while I walked across the stage in my cap and gown obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

ABSTRACT

Chronic absenteeism in public K-12 schools is a national crisis. More than 8 million students attending public schools are absent 15 or more days each school year. Research shows students attending school daily are better prepared academically and socially. In Maryland, a large urban school district has not met the state's 94% attendance requirement for several years, negatively impacting the district's student achievement. The researcher used a qualitative approach to understand the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism in elementary schools and improve average daily attendance by using parent voice data to create targeted attendance interventions. This qualitative study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identified as preventing their children from attending school daily. Additionally, this study sought to identify potential strategies schools and school districts could put into place to better support families and improve student attendance in the early elementary grades. The primary recruitment technique used to select schools and participants was purposeful sampling. The researcher collected parent voice data during interviews using a structured interview protocol. Data were categorized into common themes across interviews to understand the barriers elementary school parents identify as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily. The seven major themes that emerged from the study were access, difficult mornings, health, past school attendance, safety, home-school connection, and wrap-around services.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The United States Department of Education has specifically identified chronic student absenteeism in public K-12 schools as a "national crisis" (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018; The Problem, n.d). More than 8 million kindergarten students, high school seniors, and every grade in between are absent from school for 15 or more instructional days per academic year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018). Attending school regularly is imperative to students' academic and future success. Research suggests students who attend school regularly are better prepared to be academically successful and socially engaged (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016, McNeal, 2018). Schools are an essential social construct that plays an integral role in how students learn the skills to help them function in their communities (Pellegrini, 2007). When students do not attend school regularly, they miss meaningful opportunities to engage and develop academically, thus negatively impacting their future outcomes and increasing their chances of dropping out (Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; London et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2015).

Proactively addressing student attendance during a student's early years in school is imperative (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018). Absenteeism in the early grades is a predictor of a student's attendance as they progress through the upper grades (Robinson et al., 2018). This makes it extremely important for schools and the community to quickly identify truant students and provide proper support (Huskins, 2019). The impact of chronic absenteeism holds for all students regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and socio-

economic conditions (Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; London et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2015).

Identifying the exact causes of chronic absenteeism can be difficult, as there are a variety of reasons that contribute to students not attending school daily (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Despite the difficulty, several factors can help predict chronic absenteeism, such as health conditions, poverty, homelessness, family responsibilities, and the need to work (Allison & Attisha, 2019; London et al., 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Schools must familiarize themselves with the general causes of truancy and develop supportive strategies to encourage students to attend school daily (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Research indicates that chronic absenteeism is typically caused by numerous factors that impact the student, their parents, and their community (Canfield et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Mallett, 2016; Thomas, 2019). Finding ways to keep parents abreast of their child's attendance and providing strategies to support parents with the external factors that negatively impact student attendance is vital (Brookins, 2017; Brooks et al., 2019; DeArmas, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018).

In addition to external factors, there are individualized factors that impact student attendance. Students that experience emotional instability may struggle with attending school regularly (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Brooks et al., 2019; Havik et al., 2015, 2019; Joy, 2016). Emotionally reactive students are vulnerable to stress and may overreact in an ordinary situation (Brooks et al., 2019; Havik et al., 2015; Valencia, 2019). The emotional instability may affect these students' perceptions of the learning environment and create an illegitimate reality of the atmosphere (Brooks et al., 2019; Havik et al., 2015; Valencia, 2019).

Truancy and chronic absenteeism have implications beyond those that are academic/student performance related. Research suggests students appear to have more difficulty in social situations and problem making and keeping friends (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Havik et al., 2015; Huskins, 2019). As a result, truant students are more likely to be socially isolated and subjected to increased chances of being bullied by peers (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Havik et al., 2015; Huskins, 2019).

Students engaging in behaviors that negatively impact their health is linked to chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019). Research shows chronic absenteeism can cause increased drug usage, teenage pregnancy, violence, increased numbers of sexual partners, suicide attempts, and juvenile delinquency (Allison & Attisha, 2019). In a study that spanned from 2003 to 2013, the researchers found that chronically absent students are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested (Robertson & Walker, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Public school districts across the country struggle to maintain high daily student attendance (Huskins, 2019; Jones, 2010; Smythe-Leistico, 2018). Extensive research confirms that attendance is important because students are more likely to achieve academic success when attending school consistently (Gottfried, 2010; London et al., 2016). Moreover, research has shown that chronic absenteeism occurs in disproportionate numbers with students who are already considered high risk for dropping out or failing their classes (Canfield et al., 2019; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; Mallett, 2015).

Chronically absent students miss 15 or more school days in an academic year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d.). To assess the national elementary and secondary absenteeism crisis, schools annually report their absentee data. The

2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) provides the annual absenteeism data from nearly every public school in the United States (Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d.). The 2015-2016 CRDC national data (see Table 1) reported Black, Native American, and Pacific Islander students are the most likely to be identified as chronically absent.

Table 1

National number of public K12 students who missed 15 or more day of school in 2015-2016

Subgroup	Percentage	Number of Students
Overall	10.0%%	7,811,509
White	14.5%	3,460,559
Black	20.5%	1,523,095
Hispanic	17.0%	2,120,547
Asian	8.6%	211,591
American Indian	26.0%	138,789
Pacific Islander	22.6%	47,915
Two or More Races	18.4%	309,013

Note: National number of public K12 students who missed 15 or more day of school in 2015-2016 was retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>

Students of color tend to be more likely to be identified as chronically absent. More specifically, American Indians and Pacific Islanders are over 50% more likely to miss 15 or more school days, and black students are more than 40% likely than their white counterparts (Allison & Attisha, 2019).

While chronic absenteeism appears in all grade levels, it is most prevalent in high school and the early elementary grades (Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; London et al., 2016). Research suggests students face many challenges that make attending school daily difficult (health, poverty, homelessness, etc.), particularly in acute disadvantaged communities and areas of high poverty (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chang, 2016; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017). Schools

must identify and develop effective strategies to address student absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Ehrlich et al., 2016; London et al., 2016).). Data shows if absenteeism is not addressed, students experience increased odds of poor academic achievement and dropout.

Demographically, Black, American Indian, Pacific Islanders, low income, and students with disabilities have the highest percentages of chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Buehler et al., 2012; Spradlin et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Havik et al. (2015) determined that students with parents who show interest in their children's schoolwork have lower truancy and reduced risk for dropout. Subsequently, parental monitoring of school attendance is a likely factor influencing truancy (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Havik et al., Joy, 2015, 2016; Stripling, 2019). Implementing schoolwide attendance incentive programs is a great starting point in decreasing student truancy in elementary schools (Huskins, 2019). Huskins (2019) suggested that researching and implementing a schoolwide attendance incentive program would provide insight into the selected intervention and its effectiveness, or lack thereof.

Although widespread understanding of the importance of regular daily attendance and the subsequent impact on student success exists, an analysis of chronic absenteeism in public K-12 schools confirms that almost 15% of students are absent for 15 or more days each academic year (Allison & Attisha, 2019). As this study narrows the focus of this research project to Maryland, United States, it is notable that a large urban school district in Maryland has not met the state's 94% attendance requirement for several years, which has negatively impacted the district's student achievement (MSDE, n.d.). The district's overall attendance rates fell below the 94% attendance requirement for more than five years. The rates for the past five years were as follows; 87.3% - 2018-2019, 87.7% - 2017-2018, 90.0% - 2016-2017, 89.6% - 2015-2016, and

89.7% - 2014-2015 (MSDE, n.d.). In this district, only two of the 14 schools in an assigned network (cohort of schools assigned to a supervisory and supportive team) met or exceeded the 94% attendance requirement for the 2018-2019 school year (MSDE, n.d). The National Center for Education Statistics states that "poor attendance has serious implications for later outcomes...", and "a missed school day is a lost opportunity for students to learn" (Every School Day, n.d., para. 3). Therefore, students in the 12 schools that did not meet the 94% attendance requirement are more at risk for low academic achievement and dropping out in the future. Parental attitudes toward attending school daily influence student attendance rates (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Reid, 2007; Wallace, 2017). Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that when parents have a positive attitude towards school and are not facing multiple hardships (health concerns, homelessness, financial concerns), they tend to ensure their children attend school regularly.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identified as preventing their children from attending school daily. Additionally, this study sought to identify potential strategies schools and school districts could put into place to better support families and improve student attendance in the early elementary grades. The study focused on how parents' perceptions of and experiences with the schools impact their desire to send their elementary-aged child to school daily. If parental roles and desires are crafted as Kohn (1989), and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) described, the goal of this study was to identify the appropriate attendance intervention strategies to motivate parents to ensure their children attend school regularly. The researcher will use parental voice data collected through individual interviews to fashion attendance interventions to improve student attendance. While academic standards increase in rigor, attending school daily becomes

essential to ensure student success. As a result, not attending school daily has severe implications on chronically absent students' academic and social outcomes (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Every School Day, n.d.).

Background

Chronic absenteeism is a complex problem schools face across the nation (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chang, 2016, Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017). It is known to be a multifaceted problem that requires schools to understand the socio-economic and school community dynamics that cause adversities in students' lives (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chang, 2016, Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017). While chronic absenteeism is prevalent in all grade levels, this study focuses on chronic absenteeism in the elementary grades (K-5). Research shows student absenteeism has been linked to low student achievement and dropping out of school (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; London et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2015; Rumberger, 2011). To minimize the impact of absenteeism, schools must identify the root causes and develop appropriate interventions that specifically address each root cause (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016). Identify patterns in the causes of chronic absenteeism is a crucial tool in selecting the most effective strategies to remedy chronic absenteeism (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016).

Although chronic absenteeism is a national crisis, it is also a local concern. It is essential to examine Baltimore City Public Schools' 2020 attendance data by subgroups for elementary schools (see Table 2) and demographic data (see Table 3) to gain local context. Research shows African American students and students living in poverty are significantly impacted by chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Baker & Bishop, 2015; Cole, 2017; Mallett, 2015).

Recent research on chronic absenteeism in Baltimore has examined the causes of chronic absenteeism and intervention but has not explicitly delved into the parental perspective of the crisis. This study focuses specifically on the parental outlook of the causes of chronic absenteeism in elementary schools.

Table 2

Baltimore City Public Schools Attendance Rate by Subgroup Data for School Year 2020

Maryland State - Baltimore City		
Year	Race/Ethnicity	Attendance Rate (%) (All Students)
2020	African American	91.2
2020	Pacific Islander	94.4
2020	White	93.7
2020	Two or More	91.7
2020	Hispanic	93.7
2020	American Indian	91.5
2020	Asian	>= 95.0

Note: Baltimore City Public Schools Attendance by Subgroup Rate Data for School Year 2020 was retrieved from

<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#!/Demographics/AttendanceRate/3/E/6/1/30/XXX/X/2020>

Table 3

District at a Glance

District at a Glance			
<u>District Demographics</u>		<u>Student Demographics</u>	
District Enrollment	77,856	African American	75.7%
Elementary School Enrollment	38,195	Hispanic	14.2%
Middle School Enrollment	17,820	White	7.5%
High School Enrollment	21,841	Asian	0.8%
		American Indian	0.2%
FARMS/Low Income	58%	Pacific Islander	0.1%
		English Learners	9.6%
		Student with Disabilities	14.6%

Note: District at a Glance was retrieved from <https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/district-overview>

Students who attend school daily typically are more successful and better prepared for college and the workforce (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Romero & Lee, 2007). Students missing five or fewer days during a school year are considered to have regular attendance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Research indicates kindergarten students typically have the highest chronic absence rates, followed by high school students (London et al., 2016). Chronic absenteeism in the early grades is a predictor of chronic absenteeism in subsequent grades and unpreparedness for secondary education and the workforce (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ehrlich et al., 2016; London et al., 2016). The students who started preschool the least prepared tend to have the highest absenteeism rates and fall further behind academically as they progress through school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ehrlich et al., 2016; London et al., 2016). Schools' ability to develop effective strategies to address preschool absenteeism may be imperative to reducing student absenteeism and increasing the probability of higher academic achievement in the later grades (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ehrlich et al., 2016).

Students face a multitude of circumstances that causes chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Poverty, homelessness, and illness are amongst the heavy burdens students bear while attending school (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Many schools use multi-tiered systems, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), to find viable solutions to remedy the causes of chronic absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017). MTSS uses current data and a tiered approach to address the issues preventing students from attending school daily (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017). Tiered systems provide early warnings and progress monitoring, allowing the school to address students' needs before they are identified as

chronically absent (Kearney & Gracyzk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017).

Parents play a vital role in preventing chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Wallace, 2017). Parental beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors have a direct impact on their children attending school daily. Past studies show parents have challenges that make it difficult to send their children to school every day (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Wallace, 2017). Improving parental involvement and making parents aware of the actual number of days their child was marked absent leads to improved attendance (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Wallace, 2017).

Research Questions

This study intended to explore several questions grounded in current gaps in attendance research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The research focused on identifying ways to reduce chronic absenteeism. The aim was to determine the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism (Wallace, 2017). The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

Description of Terms

Average Daily Attendance (ADA). ADA is equal to the total number of student attendance divided by the total number of days in the regular school year. States usually use the school district's ADA to determine the district's upcoming state funding. ADA is typically lower than the school's enrollment due to transfers, drop out, and days students miss due to illness (Allen, 2018).

Attendance Intervention. Attendance interventions are a school's attempt to address individual student's needs to improve the student's Average Daily Attendance (ADA) (Joy, 2016).

Chronic Absenteeism. Frequent, excessive, or prolong student absence causing low ADA (Allen, 2018).

Student Achievement. The amount of content a student can learn and master in a predetermined period is measured by formal and informal assessments (Gutierrez, 2017).

Parental Involvement. Parental involvement is a combination of parental commitment and active participation in a school community (Bartel, 2010).

Academic Achievement. Refers to the percentage of students whose learning meets or exceeds their grade-level standards on the state assessment (MSDE, n.d.b).

Truancy. Describes students who receive unexcused absences for willfully misses school (Allison & Attisha, 2019).

Excused Absence. In Maryland, an excused absence occurs when a student is absent because of illness (with doctor's note after missing three or more days), death of a family member, court summons, religious holidays, suspension, lack of district-provided transportation, pregnancy, or a parenting student has a childcare need and submits a written note explaining the cause of the absence from a parent or guardian (Attendance, n.d).

Unexcused Absence. According to Maryland's law, an unexcused absence occurs when a student is absent for any reason not described under an excused absence (Attendance, n.d).

Parent. For this study, parent is used to represent a parent, guardian, foster parent, or any other adult that provides daily care for a school-aged child.

Elementary school. For this study, elementary school refers to school with only grades prekindergarten through grade five.

Significance of the Study

Many states use student attendance as a measure of school success (Nodworny, 2017). The state of Maryland created a star rating system to rate schools using several indicators. Attendance is one of the indicators used to critique schools. Schools are required to meet or exceed a 94% overall attendance rate. Schools must find ways to identify root causes, create interventions to address the root causes, and build meaningful partnerships to support families to reduce student truancy and chronic absenteeism (London et al., 2016; Mallett, 2016; Robinson et al., 2018). The researcher built this study on a body of research supporting utilizing families to improve student attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; London et al., 2016; Mallett, 2016; Robinson et al., 2018).

Poverty, housing, health conditions, and racial minority status have been linked to chronic absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016, Gottfried, 2017). Subsequently, chronically absent students are likely to score lower on assessments and fall behind academically, leading to increased chances of dropping out (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Cook et al., 2017; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Gottfried, 2017). Current literature reveals that students with low academic achievement caused by chronic absenteeism are more

likely to be underemployed (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Cook et al., 2017; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Gottfried, 2017).

In Robinson et al. (2018), the researchers attempted to improve student attendance by creating an intervention that enhanced the school's parent communication. The researchers designed an intervention to regularly inform parents of the number of days their child missed school. When needed, short notes were included to offer possible solutions to address the unique needs of each family (Robinson et al., 2018). The goal of the intervention was to make parents aware that sending their children to school every day is a priority (Robinson et al., 2018). While there is existing literature on the potential causes of low student attendance, there is insufficient research and data concerning how parent voice can positively impact student attendance. Due to the lack of available research on the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism, this study will provide data to educational communities to help develop interventions to combat chronic absenteeism. Studies show chronic absenteeism is a crisis faced by school districts across the nation (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Cook et al., 2017; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016). Identifying the parental perspective of the factors that cause chronic absenteeism can assist school districts with finding interventions to address the unique needs of parents of elementary-aged students and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Theoretical Framework

To better understand the underlying factors that cause students not to attend school daily, the researcher used the social constructionism framework to highlight and support a deeper understanding of the parental perspective of the factors that lead to chronic absenteeism. The social constructionism framework suggests parents' perceptions of chronic absenteeism are shaped by participation in various experiences and interactions that mold their perspective of the

importance of regular attendance (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Parental perspectives of the importance of regular attendance are defined by their personal experiences and knowledge of childhood development (Kohn, 1989). When schools understand the parents' past and present school experiences, the school can provide positive opportunities to reshape the parents' beliefs and potentially motivate them to send their child to school daily (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Overview of Research Methods

Reducing student absenteeism is a prevalent concern for schools and district offices across the United States of America (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Volkmann & Bye, 2006). Schools can minimize patterns of absenteeism by implementing proactive attendance programs (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Ford & Sutphen, 1996). Although schools implement many school-based strategies, simply implementing school-based solutions is not enough (Childress et al., 2014). Absenteeism is a complex educational problem that requires understanding the urban city's complex social environment and the experience the city's residents bring to make positive changes (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Smythe-Leistico, 2018).

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study because it stresses the participants' experience and perspective (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). In qualitative methodology, the emphasis is placed on understanding the study's participants' perspectives of a situation or experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). The strategies used in qualitative research are tools that honor the researcher's role in interpreting the data and are not a prescription (Maxwell, 2013).

The researcher used a sample of schools in the district to identify the root causes of the district's attendance deficits and understand the complex external factors that impact attendance.

The researcher conducted eight individual interviews to gather parental voice data from the study sites. The voice data were transcribed, coded, and categorized based on common themes. The researcher used ADA and parental voice data to determine the most appropriate ways to engage parents in the school's daily operations and to determine the most efficient attendance interventions. This research model allowed the data to speak for itself and not be biased by the researcher's preconceived notions (Flipp, 2014).

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

Chronic absenteeism, defined as when students are repeatedly absent from school for any excused or unexcused reason, has been called a nationwide crisis (Chang, 2016, Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017). This national crisis is a complex educational problem that requires understanding various socio-economic and school community dynamics that are contributing factors. Cole (2011) argued that to resolve truancy concerns in the lower grades, it is important to identify the root causes and to select the appropriate intervention to address the problem. Identifying patterns in student attendance can assist with selecting effective strategies to combat truancy (Cole, 2011).

School districts across the United States consider absenteeism to be a prevalent concern that they are working to reduce (Volkman & Bye, 2006), especially considering that research has shown a distinct correlation between attendance and academic achievement (Sheldon, 2007). Since chronic absence impacts students across all grade levels, even those in early elementary, it is important to understand potential patterns, causes, and implications of chronic student absenteeism on overall student achievement (London et al., 2016). There is a growing emphasis of examining the long- and short-term effects of students in their early years of public education missing numerous days from school; this importance is equally shared among educational practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018). Additionally, the ability of schools to develop effective strategies to address student absenteeism may be imperative in reducing the probability of student absenteeism and increasing the probability of higher academic achievement in the later grades (Ehrlich et al., 2016).

This review of the literature will provide unbiased information and current empirical research on the trends, impacts, and strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism for students in grade school. A diverse inclusion of literature on the prevalence of chronic absenteeism for students across grade levels, the impact of chronic absenteeism on student achievement, causes and mitigating factors contributing to frequent absences, and insight on the unique relationship between student homelessness and absenteeism will provide background information and supporting evidence for the research studies purpose. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identified as preventing their children from attending school daily. Additionally, this study sought to identify potential strategies schools and school districts could put into place to better support families and improve student attendance in the early elementary grades.

Theoretical Framework

Burr (2015) defined the extent of our various roles in society from a social constructionism frame. This frame suggests that we gain consciousness of these roles by participating in an ongoing socialization process (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Participation in this vibrant crossroads of exchanges and experiences molds our perceptions on various roles and expectations as we grow older (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Burr (2015) rationalized major influencer, such as family, mold children's viewpoints and perceptions. Children living in the same household will have similar perspectives; however, there will be some differences due to additional influencers in-and outside of the home (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Both parents and students construct meaning through this interchange of experiences and interactions. Burr (2015) argued these experiences and interactions shape our beliefs and values

over time, which impacts our future decisions. Overall, the social constructionism framework is relevant to student absenteeism and parental voice because this framework supports the idea that parents' perspectives and experiences influence how they view the importance of ensuring that their child(ren) attends school daily.

Kohn (1989) claimed parental perceptions and beliefs are defined by their personal experiences, their knowledge of child development, and other influencers they experienced over their lifespan. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) stated that parents' parental role and desire to be involved in their child's academic experience is defined by the parent's personal school experiences. Understanding parents' past and present school experiences, creating meaningful ways for parents to contribute to the school community, and offering opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of child development will allow parents of students with poor attendance to have additional positive school experiences which may alter parent perception and motivate parents to send their child to school regularly.

Absenteeism is a term that encompasses a multitude of factors. It is important to determine the type of absenteeism impacting schools because different approaches may be more effective in mitigating the occurrences.

Truancy. Truancy is typically defined as school absenteeism resulting from a student intentionally missing school without their parent's knowledge (Bond, 2004; Fremont, 2003; Shdaimah et al., 2011; Teasley, 2004). Students frequently express that they dislike school and make up excuses for being absent (Thambirajah et al., 2008). According to Fremont (2003), truancy can be categorized as non-anxiety-based absenteeism based on research that suggests that truant students do not typically display or complain of symptoms of physical or mental anxiety or distress. Additional defining characteristics of truancy are students having poor

motivation, poor academic progress, lower cognitive skills, opposition to follow rules and expectations, conflict and disorder at home, homelessness, and poverty (Fremont, 2003; Kearney, 2001; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991).

School Phobia. School phobia originally defined student absenteeism related to symptoms of fear and anxiety (Johnson, 1941). Researchers later defined school phobia to be the reluctance of a student to attend school that is caused by overall feelings of distress and/or anxiety (Waldfoegel et al., 1957). Some causes that were commonly identified to be associated with school phobia are peer interactions, public speaking, attending school-wide assemblies; and even circumstances and objects that remind the student of school such as school buses, quizzes and assessments, classroom teachers, and school leadership (e.g., principals) (Thambirajah et al., 2008; Dumas & Nilsen, 2003; Kearney, 2001).

Separation Anxiety. Separation anxiety means a “developmentally inappropriate and excessive fear or anxiety concerning separation from those to whom the individual is attached” (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013, p. 190). A student’s consistent unwillingness or refusal to attend school is an example of how separation anxiety impacts student attendance (APA, 2013).

School Refusal. School refusal identifies absenteeism that is based on anxiety such as panic disorders, social anxieties, and overall emotional distress about going to school or being at school (Suveg et al., 2005). Students exhibiting school refusal present with physical symptoms, including diarrhea, nausea, shaking/tremors, perspiring, vomiting, and having difficulty breathing (Kearney, 2001). When a student displaying school refusal symptoms is assured that they will not be attending school, their symptoms significantly decrease and they appear to recover quickly (Thambirajah, Grandison, & De-Hayes, 2008).

School Refusal Behavior. School refusal behavior comprehensively describes a refusal to go to school and a difficulty for a student between the ages of 5-17 to remain inside of the classroom for the duration of a school day (Kearney & Silverman, 1996). School refusal behavior is typically viewed along a spectrum of attendance problems. Characteristics of school refusal may include increased displays of misbehavior as an attempt to show opposition to attending school, students attempting to bargain and plead to adults to avoid attending school in the future, and students missing school either sporadically or for long or extended periods (Kearney & Bates, 2005). Students exhibiting school refusal behaviors commonly internalize as well as externalize behavioral issues (Kearney et al., 2004). The chart below categorizes the common internalized and externalized behaviors that students displaying school refusal may exhibit (Kearney, 2001; Stroobant & Jones, 2006)

Table 4

School Refusal Behaviors

Internal Behaviors	External Behaviors
Fear	Temper tantrums
Somatic complaints	Noncompliance
Clinging to caregivers	Defiance
Fatigue	Aggression
Depression	Eloping from home/school
Suicidality	

Prevalence of Chronic Absenteeism

School absenteeism may be more prevalent in students than the presence of most of the childhood mental disorders (Kearney, 2008b). It is estimated that at some point in any given school year, between 5-28% of school-age youth display some form of school absenteeism (Kearney, 2001). While it is challenging to determine the exact frequency of occurrence of student absenteeism because of the numerous components (e.g., tardiness to school, skipping

class periods) the literature reviewed will examine those instances of simple student absenteeism (i.e., full missed school days) (Kearney 2001, 2008a).

The prevalence of simple student absenteeism varies within different geographic locations in the United States and varies depending on the type of school (e.g., grade level, rural vs. urban) (Kearney, 2001; Teasley, 2004). Research does suggest that student absenteeism is less prevalent in elementary schools and becomes substantially more prevalent in public schools within inner cities with larger populations of students (Kearney, 2001; Teasley, 2004).

Most literature addressing chronic absenteeism centers around it being considered a problem primarily for secondary school students; however, the causes and implications for students in younger grades are receiving more attention and closer examination from researchers, education policymakers, and educational leaders (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Nearly 15 percent of students in grade school (grades 1-12) in the United States are impacted by chronic absenteeism (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Absenteeism is a pervasive issue that is problematic for students throughout all school grade levels. However, it typically occurs more in the earlier grades (e.g., elementary grades 1-5) (Balfanz & Byrnes 2012; Romero & Lee, 2007). The high prevalence of chronic absenteeism and its consequential impact on student academic success validates the need to broaden the discussion and research about chronic absenteeism across all grade levels, not solely secondary school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Research supports the finding that students who have regular attendance at school are typically more successful and better prepared for the post-secondary transition into careers and higher education because they develop work-transferable skills like perseverance, problem-solving, and the ability to work as a team with peers to achieve a set goal (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Romero & Lee, 2007). Regular attendance can be defined as a student missing five or

fewer days of school in a given school year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Research indicates that it is typical for kindergarten students to have the highest rates of chronic absence, followed by high school students (London et al., 2016). Additionally, research supports prior chronic absences and an excessive number of tardies are a primary predictor of chronic absences in grade school, meaning that chronically absent students continued to not attend school regularly in subsequent years at a higher rate than students without a history of chronic absence (London et al., 2016). The findings also indicate that chronically absent students experience lower academic achievement which continues year after year because of their absences (London et al., 2016). Improving student attendance, academic success, and preparedness for post-secondary opportunities is an important goal for school districts across the United States. The strategies to do so are far from simple. Student absenteeism is a complex issue for school districts due to a myriad of factors that are both unique in some regards and similar in others (Hendron & Kearney, 2016).

Impact of Student Absenteeism

Student absenteeism significantly impacts student achievement. Absenteeism has been strongly linked to students eventually dropping out of school (Rumberger, 2011). There have also been other correlations between absenteeism and student decisions, or outcomes identified in research (Hendron & Kearney, 2016). Data supports that chronic absenteeism has a correlating relationship with student engagement in unsafe behaviors (i.e., drug/alcohol abuse, violence, suicide, risky sexual behavior, teen pregnancy, etc.) (Kearney, 2008). Data also supports that student absenteeism is rooted within other social/emotional/behavioral issues, including mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, mood disorders, depression, behavior disorders) (Kearney &

Albano, 2004; Knollman et al., 2010; McShane et al., 2001). Many factors impact student attendance, including family, economy, and community (Cole, 2011).

Researchers, educational leaders, and policymakers are seeking solutions and developing policies that can prevent and/or decrease student absenteeism and correlated issues such as increased student dropout rates (De Witte & Csillag, 2014; Estevao & Alvares, 2014, Heers et al., 2014;). They are attempting to identify both the antecedent causes of absenteeism and dynamics that might be connecting absenteeism to student achievement as a means of mitigating its negative consequences (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018).

Causes of Frequent Absence

A plethora of contributing factors that influence chronic absence has yet to be fully examined. As researchers study these mitigating factors, variances in location, and individual student characteristics make finding universal or common causes challenging (London et al., 2016). Taking a demographic approach, typically students who are African American, Indigenous/Native American, Pacific Islanders, low income, and students who have disabilities (learning and/or physical) have the highest percentages of chronic absence (Buehler et al., 2012; Spradlin et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Socio-economic factors also contribute to chronic absenteeism. This can include a lack of school and community supports for students to successfully transition through primary and secondary school, a lack of good and consistent communication between schools and students' families, distressed neighborhoods having lower quality schools in terms of infrastructure and resources, and elevated levels of violence in the school's surrounding neighborhoods (Chang & Romero, 2008; Sugrue, et al., 2016). A student's family dynamics also correlate to chronic absence. Rates of absenteeism have been linked to the level of parental supervision (Sampson &

Laub, 1994) and available time that parents spend engaged in their student's schooling (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; McNeal, 1999; Muller, 1993).

Research has found that low attendance rates are caused by varying factors for different age groups. Low attendance rates for primary grades (i.e., kindergarten and first-grade students) has been tied to the lower socioeconomic status (SES) of the family (Ready, 2010). Lower socioeconomic status was also shown to impact student achievement overall (Ready, 2010). For example, there is data to support that there is an association between chronic absenteeism and standardized test achievement (Gottfried, 2010). Additionally, there is data to support that chronic absenteeism of students in primary grades is associated with lowered student performance on standardized tests not only for those students who were absent but also for their classroom peers (Gottfried, 2010, 2015). Additionally, absenteeism affects teacher lesson planning (Thornton, Darmody, & McCoy, 2013).

Chronic illness has been found to contribute to chronic absenteeism, and students with chronic illness require more support than students without chronic illness (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). Ironically, data shows students with chronic illness were not more likely to receive additional interventions than those without an illness (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). Research suggests schools that are not meeting the needs of students with chronic illnesses play a role in their poor attendance, causing them to suffer academically, socially, and emotionally (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). Conversely, students without chronic illnesses outperformed students with chronic illnesses and had significantly higher attendance rates (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). To adequately give students with chronic illnesses the needed supports,

schools and educators must implement research-based interventions (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019).

It is critical to identify the factors causing chronic absenteeism to determine the supports and resources an agency should use to improve attendance, as the causes of absenteeism in the lower grades can be dramatically different than the causes in the higher grades (Agrawal, 2018; Gutierrez, 2017; London et al., 2016). It has been found that existing truancy interventions are punitive and do not offer consistent support to address the true causes of chronic absence, particularly in elementary schools (Hancock et al., 2017; London et al., 2016). Chronic absence while in elementary school is most often a result of the parents' challenges with getting the student to school (Hancock et al., 2017; London et al., 2016; Mullvain, 2016). Despite the underlying contributing factors, building a comprehensive partnership between families, school, and the community has shown to improve attendance and reduce the rate of chronic absence in schools when the school offers positive parental involvement activities, and focuses on improving attendance over time (London et al., 2016). The causes of students' absence and school dropout can be categorized into five main themes (Sahin et al., 2016).

The first theme is the family-child relationship. Parents who have no authority or struggle with communicating with their children are more likely to experience higher absenteeism (Sahin et al., 2016). When parents fail to maintain an open line of communication with the school, their children tend to experience more absences and higher dropout rates (Sahin et al., 2016). A second theme is ignoring absenteeism. When families experience events, such as weddings or family trips, the parent may decide not to send their children to school (Sahin et al., 2016). A third theme is family problems. Divorce, domestic violence, and death can cause a student to miss several days of school. An ill family member requiring support at home can also

negatively impact a student's attendance (Sahin et al., 2016). A fourth theme is the view of education. When a parent does not hold high regard for education, their children have an increased chance of chronic absence (Sahin et al., 2016). The final main theme is economic impossibilities. Students from families that struggle economically sometimes are unprepared for learning and do not have a sufficient environment at home for studying and as a result, are often absent (Sahin et al., 2016).

In addition to the parental impacts on student attendance, parental perceptions and beliefs also play a role (Kohn, 1989). Kohn (1989) claimed parental perceptions and beliefs are defined by their personal experiences, their knowledge of child development, and other influencers they experienced over their lifespan. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) state that parents' role and desire to be involved in their child's academic experience is defined by the parent's personal school experiences. Understanding parents' past and present school experiences, creating meaningful ways for parents to contribute to the school community, and offering opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of child development will allow parents of students with poor attendance to have additional positive school experiences (Kohn, 1989). This may alter parent perception and motivate parents to send their children to school regularly.

There are challenges with engaging and communicating with parents to reduce chronic absenteeism, indicating that it becomes progressively more challenging to establish communication with parents when students' absences begin to accrue (Wilson, 2018). Developing positive relationships with parents at the beginning of the school year may lead to better communication with parents and can assist with improving attendance (Wilson, 2018).

Research shows that the consequences of truancy are usually negative, such as increased high school dropout rates (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012) and

poor academic performance (Considine & Zappala, 2001; Petrides et al., 2005). In contrast, regular school attendance has been linked to higher standardized test scores and higher grades in class (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Tanner-Smith & Wilson, 2013). In addition to increased school dropout rates, poor academic performance includes lower test scores in reading and mathematics, lower performance and achievement in class, low literacy skills, retention, and involvement in the juvenile justice system (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Truancy has also been linked to negative outcomes that are not school-related, such as substance abuse (Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Maynard et al., 2012) involvement in crime, and delinquency (Baltimore City Health Department Office of Epidemiology and Planning, 2009; Hirschfield & Gasper, 2011).

Homelessness

Student homelessness presents unique challenges to attendance, as research indicates homeless children typically miss more days of school and are nearly nine times more likely to be absent than their non-homeless peers (Nolan et al., 2013). The poor academic outcomes for homeless students are often first a result of the challenges the students encounter when they enroll or try to sustain enrollment in school (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Statistics estimate that just around 25 % of homeless students graduate from high school, and homeless students perform more poorly on numerous academic outcomes in comparison to their peers (Miller, 2011). Homeless students have been reported to perform below proficiency on assessments in reading and math (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009) and have been found to be approximately 1.5 times more likely to perform below grade-level expectations in reading/language arts and nearly 2.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in math (Duffield & Lovell, 2008, cited in Miller, 2011; Berliner, 2009; Buckner, 2008; Buckner, Bassuk, & Weinreb, 2001; Di Santo, 2012).

Homelessness is usually considered to be associated with transience; in other words, it is thought to involve youth who do not have stable housing, leading to increased school mobility or transfers (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Unplanned or unexpected transfers to different schools may be a mitigating factor on lower academic outcomes for homeless students (Canfield et al., 2016). When schools have homeless students, they have the responsibility to implement school-wide provisions to address the challenges it presents to student attendance and work to reduce student absences by removing obstacles that homeless students may be facing (Canfield et al., 2016). This can include putting measures in place to help homeless students enroll in school, the provision of opportunities to help homeless students maintain enrollment in their school, having access to resources for homeless students to help with continued enrollment and attendance (i.e., transportation) (Canfield et al., 2016).

Homelessness is a growing issue for schools across the United States (Canfield et al., 2016). More understanding is needed to better develop interventions that minimize the impact of homelessness on children and youth (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). Additionally, schools cannot solve the issue on their own. Social work is a major component of supporting truant students and their families (Marrett, 2016). Historically, social workers have provided community-based support for families, such as mental health supports, addiction counseling, trauma recovery, etc. (Marrett, 2016). Although social workers are charged with connecting families to community supports, doing so is difficult (Marrett, 2016). Finding ways to align stakeholders and efforts to reduce truancy is challenging but necessary if the goal is to support our young people with productively navigating into adulthood (Marrett, 2016). In addition to the support and involvement of social workers, federal and local government resources are also needed to help address the issues and support homeless youth so that they can take advantage of the

educational opportunities offered to them (Goldman & La Castra, 2000).

Table 5 illustrates the common factors that impact student attendance in six contextual areas; child, parent, family, peer, school, and community (Skedgell, 2017). The numerous reasons causing student absenteeism can mostly be categorized into one of these six areas (Skedgell, 2017). The areas listed impact student absenteeism in several ways, with some students being impacted by more than one factor simultaneously (Skedgell, 2017). It is important for school staff, school leadership, and other stakeholders working on improving student attendance to have a clear understanding of the factors impacting their student population to design and implement effective strategies to support their students in improving their daily school attendance (Skedgell, 2017).

Table 5*Key Contextual Factors Related to Problematic School Absenteeism*

Context	Factor
Child	Extensive work hours outside of school; Externalizing symptoms/psychopathology; Grade retention; History of absenteeism; Internalizing symptoms/psychopathology; Learning-based reinforcers of absenteeism/functions; Low self-esteem and school commitment; Person traits and attributional styles; Poor health or academic proficiency; Pregnancy; Problematic relationships with authority figures; Race and age; Trauma; Underdeveloped social and academic skills
Parent	Inadequate parenting skills; low expectations of school performance attendance; Male treatment; Problematic parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian); Poor communication with school officials; Poor involvement and supervision; Psychopathology; School dropout and parents and among relatives; School withdrawal; Single parent
Family	Enmeshment; Ethnic differences from school personnel; Homelessness; Intense conflict and chaos; Large family size; Poor access to educational aid; Poor cohesion and expressiveness; Poverty; Resistance to acculturation; Stressful family transitions (e.g., divorce, illness, unemployment, moving); Transportation problems
Peer	Participation in gangs and gang-related activities; Poor participation in extracurricular activities; Pressure to conform to group demands for absenteeism or other delinquent acts; Proximity to deviant peers; Support alluring activities outside of school such as drug use; Victimization from bullies or otherwise
School	Dangerousness poor school climate; Frequent teacher absences; High systematic levels of grade retention; High punitive or legal means to address all cases are problematic absenteeism; Inadequate, irrelevant, or tedious curricular; Inadequate praise for student achievement and attendance; Inadequate responsiveness to diversity issues; Inconsistent or minimum consequences for absenteeism; Poor monitoring of attendance; Poor student-teacher relationships; School-based racism and discrimination
Community	Disorganized/unsafe neighborhood; Economic pull factors (e.g., plentiful well-paying jobs requiring little formal education); Geographical cultural in subculture values; High gang-related activity; Intense interracial tension; Lack of social and educational support services; School district policies and legal statutes regarding absenteeism

(Skedgell, 2017, p. 27)

Successful Interventions: Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a model of school intervention that includes evidenced-based and contemporary strategies for implementation and instruction (Skedgell, 2017). MTSS uses an approach that is based on current data to solve issues impacting student success, such as chronic absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). MTSS utilizes a tiered hierarchy of formal and informal assessments, and strategies to address student absenteeism: preventative (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) (Skedgell, 2017).

Tier 1 strategies are universal assessments and interventions that are implemented for all students regardless of their attendance data, with the intended purpose of preventing student absenteeism (Skedgell, 2017). Strategies in this first tier involve school-wide involvement to support students' improved mental and physical health, their safety in school, their socio-emotional functioning, and to increase parent involvement (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Tier 1 strategies are proactively targeted to students whose attendance is non-problematic (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017), and may include strategies such as daily attendance monitoring and data collection of all unexcused and excused absences (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Tier 1 strategies also involve student surveys to identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the overall quality of the school climate and culture (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017).

Tier 2 strategies include targeted assessments and interventions that are intended to address students that have an increased number of school absences which may (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Skedgell, 2017). The targeted tier 2 strategies are implemented to focus on students identified as at-risk and in need of additional supports beyond those offered by the tier 1 universal strategies (Sailor et al., 2009). Tier 2 strategies include student, parent, peer, and school official interviews to gather more detailed data and information that can help determine the causes and consequences of students' absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). The tier 2

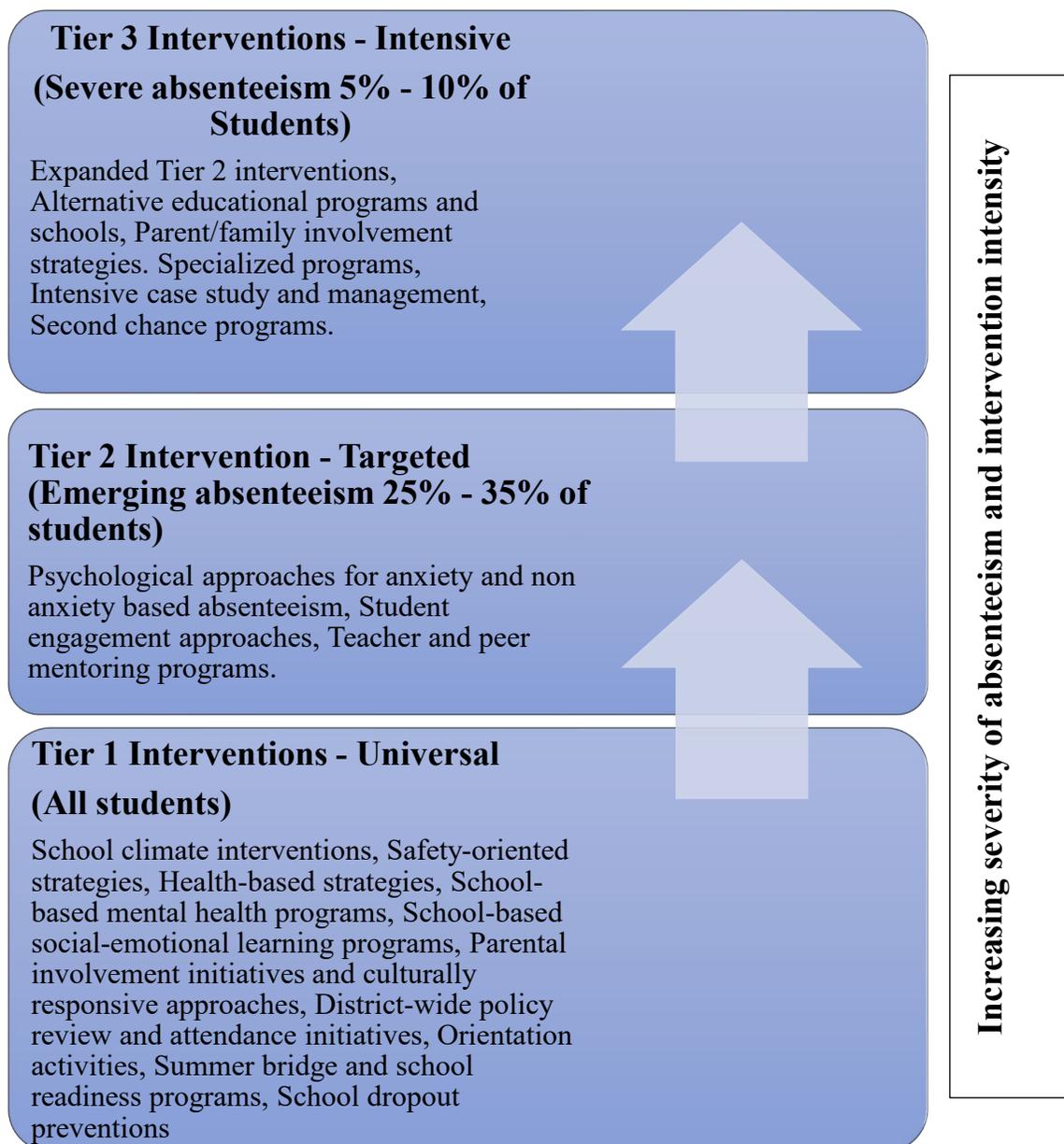
strategies include a variety of assessment formats such as questionnaires, informal and formal observations of student behavior, record review, and formal assessments (Kearney, 2016). Tier 2 intervention strategies additionally include multidisciplinary approaches to support improved student mental/emotional functioning and school engagement/re-engagement (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014).

Tier 3 strategies include intensive assessments and interventions to support students with identified problematic, or chronic, absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Kearney, 2016). These more intensive strategies and supports are centered on those students who have been identified as having significant patterns of school absenteeism that demonstrate a need for more extensive efforts and supports (Kearney, 2016). Tier 3 intervention strategies include analysis of individual case studies and input from several additional assessments (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Tier 3 intervention strategies often include extended interventions from Tier 2, as well as alternate programs to support the students (Kearney, 2016).

MTSS an appropriate approach to positively impact student absenteeism for several reasons (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). One main advantage is that it provides earlier identification and progress monitoring of students who need interventions (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). There is a need for intervention before the student's attendance becomes what is identified as problematic or chronic absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014).

Figure 1

A multitier model for problematic school absenteeism



Note: Summary from “Managing school absenteeism as multiple tiers: An evidence-based and practical guide for professions” by C. A. Kearney, 2016, New York, Oxford University Press.

Parental Role

The beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors of parents and guardians of school-age children have a direct impact on their children's daily attendance. Hornby & Blackwell (2018) affirmed one of the benefits of increasing parent involvement is improved school attendance. Rogers & Fellers (2018) targeted two biased beliefs of a selected cohort of parents of students with chronic absences. Their research demonstrated nearly a double in the absence-reduction impact rate when parents were provided information on their child's total absences (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The study showed that parents often have biased beliefs regarding their child's total accrued absences (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Student attendance is also impacted by parents' perceptions of chronic absenteeism (Wallace, 2017). Wallace's (2017) research demonstrated parents have challenges that cause their children to be chronically absent and identified supports parents expressed would be needed for them to ensure daily attendance of their child. These challenges can be mitigated via targeted and differentiated support from their schools (Wallace, 2017).

The overall takeaway of these identified parental impacts on student attendance is for schools and stakeholders to intentionally include these impacts when discussing and determining school and community-based resources to support improved student attendance. For the successful outcome of any school initiative (including academic, social-emotional, and attendance) the school, community, and family have to be purposely and actively involved and considered.

Conclusion

Chronic absenteeism is a complex nationwide crisis that requires understanding various socio-economic and school community dynamics (Chang, 2016). Researchers, educational leaders, and policymakers across the United States are working to create and initiate policies and

practices that will reduce truancy and its impacts on student achievement (Sheldon, 2007; Volkmann & Bye, 2006). It is imperative for school stakeholders to first identify the root causes of student absenteeism and then select appropriate interventions that will appropriately address the identified problem (Cole, 2011).

Student absenteeism is a prevalent concern for school districts across America, and districts work intentionally to reduce its occurrence and subsequent consequences on student achievement (Sheldon, 2007; Volkmann & Bye, 2006). It is an issue that impacts students in all grade levels, including early elementary making it essential to determine potential patterns, causes, and implications of chronic student absenteeism on overall student achievement (London et al., 2016). There is additional importance in school stakeholders going beyond identifying the factors contributing to student absenteeism but to also examine the long- and short-term impact of missed instruction for students in their early years of public education (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018). Lastly, it is of great importance for schools and school districts to utilize data to develop effective strategies to effectively address student absenteeism to reduce the likelihood of continued absenteeism and to increase the possibility for the students to gain higher academic achievement in the later grades (Ehrlich et al., 2016). Chronic absence affects students across all grade levels, and it is important to understand the patterns and implications of chronic student absenteeism on overall student achievement, and to investigate effective interventions and strategies that may positively impact student absenteeism in any given school or school district (London et al., 2016).

This review of the literature provided unbiased information and current empirical research about the trends, impacts, and strategies being used by schools and school districts to reduce chronic absenteeism for students in grade school. This diverse collection of literature

provides insight on the prevalence of chronic absenteeism for students across grade levels, the impact of chronic absenteeism on student achievement, the various causes and contributing factors related to frequent student absences, and insight on the unique relationship between student homelessness and absenteeism. This literature review provides background information and supporting evidence for the research study's purpose in determining if targeting parental engagement will improve students' daily attendance in the northwest sector of Baltimore City.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

Absenteeism in the early grades is a predictor of students' attendance in later grades (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Robinson et al., 2018). When students do not attend school daily, they miss prime opportunities to engage in grade-appropriate instruction. Missing grade-level instruction continuously increases students' chances of dropping out and negatively impacts their future (Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; London et al., 2016; Mahoney, 2015). The increased chance of dropping out and the negative impact of absenteeism on students' futures make it extremely important for schools and communities to quickly identify truant students and provide targeted supports (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019).

It is common for students in the early grades to suffer from chronic absenteeism. Research shows students who start preschool unprepared tend to have higher absenteeism rates and struggle academically (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ehrlich et al., 2016). Schools' ability to strategically identify the causes of absenteeism is imperative in developing strategies to remedy the barriers and improve academic achievement (Ansari & Gottfried, 2018; Ehrlich et al., 2016). Accurately identifying the exact causes of chronic absenteeism can be challenging, as there is a wide range of barriers that contribute to students not attending school daily (Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). While identifying the exact causes of chronic absenteeism can be difficult, schools must familiarize themselves with the general causes and develop supportive strategies to improve student attendance (Sahin et al., 2016). Robinson et al. (2018) argued the key to improve student attendance is finding ways to

keep parents abreast of their child's attendance and providing supportive strategies to assist parents with external factors that cause them to not send their child(ren) to school.

Urban school districts throughout the United States struggle to maintain and meet daily attendance expectations (Huskins, 2019; Jones, 2010; Smythe-Leistico, 2018). Research has shown absenteeism occurs at increased rates in urban school districts that serve students who are considered high risk for dropping out and failing one or more classes (Baker & Bishop, 2015; Cole, 2017; Mallett, 2015). While the focus of this study is narrowed to Maryland, United States, it is notable that a large urban school district in Maryland has not met the state's 94% attendance requirement for over five years (MSDE, n.d.).

In one of Maryland's more urban school districts, only two of the 14 schools in a network met the state's 94% attendance requirement for the 2018-2019 school year (MSDE, n.d.). As a result, the students in the 12 schools that did not meet the 94% attendance requirement are at increased risk for falling behind academically and future drop out (Cook et al., 2017; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018). Parental attitude towards student attendance directly impacts schools' overall attendance rates (Reid, 2007; Robinson et al., 2018; Wallace, 2017). When parents have a positive attitude towards school and are not facing multiple external hardships (such as health concerns, homelessness, etc.), they tend to regularly send their child(ren) to school (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005; Robinson et al., 2018; Wallace, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identify as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily. The study focused on how parents' perceptions and experiences impacted their desire and/or ability to send their elementary-aged child(ren) to school daily. Parental perceptions and beliefs

are crafted by their personal experiences, knowledge of child development, and other influencers they experienced over their lifetime (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Kohn, 1998). This chapter details the research design and methodology used to investigate the factors associated with low attendance rates in a cohort of elementary schools in the northeast sector of Baltimore City.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

Research Design

A study's research design is the overall strategy or action plan that defines the "specific procedures involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis, and report writing" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p.20). The design integrates the multiple components of the study in a logical strategic manner to adequately address the research problem (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, the design serves as the roadmap for collecting, measuring, and analyzing the data collected during the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

Qualitative research methodology is a well-established mode of inquiry in education (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as interview transcripts that share opinions and experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Since qualitative research is explicitly derived from people's experiences and perspectives, it provides a better explanation than other research models as it is sensitive to the individuals in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) claimed the open-ended inductive strategies used in qualitative research give qualitative research an advantage when conducting research that will be used to improve current practices. Typically, qualitative research is used as the mode of inquiry when studying the social sciences such as education, religion, sociology, history, etc. (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was the most suitable research design as qualitative research stresses the participants' experience and perspective (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2013), "The strength of qualitative research derives significantly from a process orientation towards the world, and the inductive approach, focus on specific situations or people and emphasis on descriptions rather than numbers that this required" (p. 30). Qualitative research is valuable when conducting research that seeks to understand the experiences of the study participants in an education setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). This study aimed to use parent voice data to highlight the parental perspective of the cause of poor attendance. The qualitative design allowed for a deeper understanding of the parental experiences that influenced their view about the importance of attending school regularly.

Additionally, the methodology highlighted the causes of poor attendance and provided structure to collect, analyze and code the data.

Participant Selection

The primary recruitment technique used to select schools and participants was purposeful sampling. When using purposeful sampling, participants and sites are chosen intentionally to gather better data and insight on crucial circumstances relative to the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). The general standard used in selecting study participants and sites is the depth of the information that can be collected from the participants or site (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). More specifically, homogeneous sampling, a form of purposeful sampling, was used to identify three elementary schools in the northeast sector of Baltimore City that did not meet the state's 94% average daily attendance requirement for the past several years. Homogenous purposeful sampling is used when the researcher intentionally samples a group of participants or sites with a similar defining characteristic (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

Setting

A large urban school district in Maryland did not meet the state's 94% attendance requirement for several years, which negatively impacted the district's student achievement (MSDE, n.d.). The district's overall attendance rates fell below the 94% attendance requirement for more than five years. Table 6 shows the district's attendance rates from school year 2014-2015 to school year 2018-2019.

Table 6*2018-2019 District Attendance Rates Over Five Years*

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
89.7%	89.6%	90.0%	87.7%	87.3%

Note: District attendance over five years was retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Demographics/AttendanceRate/3/99/6/1/30/XXXX>

The Maryland State Department of Education (n.d.) reported the 2018-2019 school year student population for the three of the schools in the network being used for this study as 429 (school 1), 295 (school 2), and 761 (school 3) students. Each school relatively maintained its student population over the past three years. Table 7 shows additional demographic data, including the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD), students receiving Title I services, social-economic status as measured through the school's reporting of free and reduced meal services (FARMS), and student homelessness rates for the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 7*2018-2019 School Demographics*

School	SWD	Title I	FARMS	Homeless
1	17.6%	≥95.0%	68.8%	7.6%
2	17.9%	≥95.0%	62.9%	≤5.0%
3	13.1%	≥95.0%	59.9%	≤5.0%

Note: Data for the 2019 Maryland State Department of Education MCAP was retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/SchoolsList/Index?l=30>

During the 2018-2019 school year, the Maryland State Department of Education reported the overall attendance rate for the All Students subgroup as 89.1% at School 1, 91.2% at School 2, and 92.9% at School 3. Also, the schools' chronic absenteeism rates for the 2018-2019 school year were 42.3%, 40.3%, and 32.3%, respectively. Table 8 shows the study sites' Maryland

Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) proficiency levels for English Language Arts and Mathematics for grades three, four, and five.

Table 8

Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient on the 2019 MCAP

	English Language Arts			Mathematics		
	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 1	School 2	School 3
Grade 3	13.2%	10.9%	10.4%	12.5%	8.7%	13.2%
Grade 4	7.1%	20.4%	6.8%	13.6%	14.8%	9.7%
Grade 5	22.9%	12.5%	7.1%	11.1%	10.6%	12.6%

Note: Data for the 2019 Maryland State Department of Education MCAP was retrieved from <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/SchoolsList/Index?l=30>

The community demographics for School 2 consists mainly of single-family homes ranging from about \$45,000 to \$270,000. Homes in School 2 generally sit on quarter-acre lots with three bedrooms and two bathrooms (Gardenville, n.d.). School 2 is within walking distance for most of its students. In 2019, MSDE reported School 2's mobility rate, the percentage of students transferring to another school during the school year, as 23.7%.

School 1 and School 3 both are located in the same northeast Baltimore City community. School 1 is a community made up of apartments, rowhomes, and single-family homes. The median home purchase price in the community of school 1 is \$130,000, with 42% of the population owning their homes and 58% renting (Frankford, n.d.). Most of School 1 and School 3's student body walk to school daily. In 2019, MSDE (n.d.) reported School 1 and School 3's mobility rates as 42.3% and 32.2%, respectively.

Participants

After approval from the Institutional Review Board at Northwest Nazarene University (see Appendix H), the researcher emailed the principals of the three elementary schools to solicit participants (see Electronic School Recruiting Email Appendix D). Each principal selected two

or three participants to participate in this study (see Site Permission letters in Appendix B). The three principals identified potential participants (parents) using homogeneous purposeful sampling. To participate in this study, each participant had to be at least 18 years of age, was required to have at least one child enrolled consecutively in one of the three school sites from school year 2019-2020 through school year 2021-2022, and that child had to be identified as chronic absenteeism during the 2019-2020 school year. Allen (2018) defines chronic absenteeism as frequent, excessive, or prolonged absence causing low ADA.

Once a participant agreed, the participant received a written informed consent via email stating their willingness to participate and be recorded during the interviews. This correspondence also included the participants' written rights to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. All participants were required to return the written informed consent form as a prerequisite to participating in the study (see Appendix A). Once the potential participants returned the consent forms, the principals assigned each participant a pseudonym to protect the participant's identity (see Table 9).

Table 9

Participant Profile Information

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Education Level	Years at School
Participant one	Female	21 - 25	High School Diploma	4
Participant two	Female	21 - 25	High School Diploma	4
Participant three	Female	41 - 45	Doctoral Degree	4
Participant four	Female	31 - 35	High School Diploma	2
Participant five	Female	31 - 35	Associate Degree	3
Participant six	Female	41 - 45	High School Diploma	3
Participant seven	Male	36 - 40	High School Diploma	2
Participant eight	Female	41 - 45	Master's degree	3

Data Collection

The researcher held individual interviews using open-ended questions to capture the parental perceptions of the causes of poor ADA and potential interventions the school can implement to improve low student attendance (see Parental Interview Questions and Protocol Appendices C). Eight participants were selected from the three schools in the northeast sector of Baltimore City, eight participants total, using purposeful sampling. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the factors that influence poor schoolwide and student-level attendance from a parental perspective.

Using individual interviews to interview participants in qualitative educational research is widely accepted (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use individual interviews to collect data about shared experiences and perspectives from several individuals in a one-on-one setting (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). During the interview sessions, the researcher creates a warm and welcoming environment and asks a few general questions to encourage a discussion (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Interviews are beneficial when the researcher would like to understand the lived experiences of the study participants and how the participants perceive those experiences (Seidman, 2019). Interviewing research is centered on the participants' individual stories because their stories have worth. Individual interviews in qualitative research requires the interviewer to understand they are not the center of attention and that the participants' experiences (Seidman, 2019). is the focus. "This method assumes that an individual's attitude and beliefs are socially constructed: They do not form in a vacuum" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 154).

The interviews for this study were digitally recorded for accuracy and to minimize bias. The researcher identified each school site and participant using inclusive pseudonyms that were sensitive and respectful to the study sites and participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The

use of inclusive pseudonyms was accomplished by studying appropriate language construction before engaging in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Schools and participants were assigned pseudonyms to respond to the interview questions anonymously and confidentially. The researcher specifically used the identified method to protect the identity of the participants. The use of pseudonyms was important because parents of students identified as chronically absent violate the law and are subject to local sanctions and possible fines. Participants could participate in one one-hour long interview with the option to freely decline to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer and/or to stop participation at any time. The researcher stored the interview recordings on an encrypted thumb drive and housed the thumb drive in a lockbox. Only the researcher knew the encrypted thumb drive's password and possessed the key to the lockbox.

Interview Protocol

The interviews were conducted using a structured format protocol. The researcher used a structured format protocol because it required the participants to respond to specific questions (Hall, 2020). Structured formatted interviews are used in qualitative research to force the participants to concentrate on specific researcher-centric questions and minimizes opportunities for participants to stray off-topic (Hall, 2020).

The researcher organized the interview content using three broad categories of questions: (1) warm-up questions, (2) questions related to attendance, and (3) closing questions (Hall, 2020).

Warm-up Questions. The warm-up questions familiarized each participant and fostered an environment where the participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts on the research topic.

Questions Related to Attendance. This section of questioning was directly related to the study's research focus. The researcher organized the questions related to attendance using a funnel approach (broad questions leading to more specific questions). Starting with broader questions allowed the researcher to foreshadow ideas early during the interview protocol that helped the participants generate ideas about questions explored later during the interview (Hall, 2020).

Closing Questions. The researcher used the closing questions section of the interview protocol to summarize the key themes that emerged throughout the interview and allow the participants to add information that was not previously mentioned (Hall, 2020; Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Interview Pilot

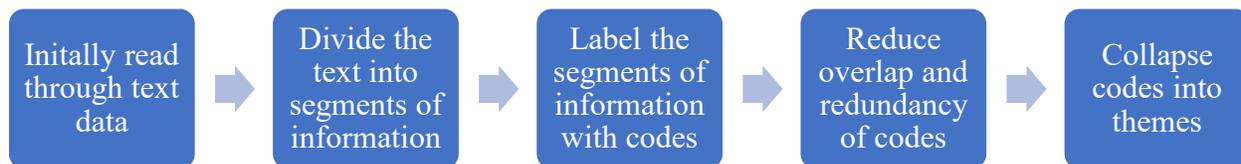
The researcher piloted the interview protocol with one parent from each school to validate the instrument. The purpose of the validation process was to confirm the interview questions were straightforward, revise the structure of the questions as needed, and assess the researcher's effectiveness as the interview moderator (Breen, 2006; Malmqvist, 2019). The researcher used data collected from the pilot to improve the interview protocol's clarity, reliability, and specificity. The pilot certified the interview questions yielded data related to shared experiences of the participants pertaining to student attendance. Breen (2006) states piloting can drastically improve the data gather from interviews. Interview pilots allow the researcher to determine the best approach, questioning, and structure that works for them before the main investigation (Breen, 2006; Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Analytical Methods

Data analysis is the process of reviewing data, searching for general themes, and drawing conclusions from a dataset (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participants' responses were recorded in a digital format to be later transcribed. After transcription, the data was coded and categorized using an Excel spreadsheet to identify common themes across interviews. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) summarized the steps of qualitative data analysis in five general phases, (1) initially read through text data, (2) divide the text into segments of information, (3) label the segment of information with codes, (4) reduce overlap and redundancy of codes, and (5) collapse codes into themes (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Visual Model of the Coding Process in Qualitative Research



Note: Summary from "Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research," by J.W. Creswell & T.C. Guetterman, 2019, New Jersey: Pearson.

The statements the participants disclosed during the interviews were read, divided into segments of information, labeled with codes, truncated, then collapsed into common themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). During the analysis process, Microsoft Excel was used to organize the statements using multiple codes and to categorize the common themes, words, and phrases across the interviews. To keep the data as close to the actual conversation as possible, the researcher did not correct grammar or include clarification of phrases that may be difficult to understand in the transcript (O'Conner & Gibson, 2003). When clarification was needed, the researcher asked for clarification during the interviews. Additionally, after analyzing the data,

each participant was allowed to review the data for accuracy (see Data Verification Form Appendix G). The common themes identified across interviews allowed the qualitative research to provide meaningful data. The data assisted the researcher with better understanding the barriers that prevent children from attending school daily and what schools can put into place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child to school every day.

Limitations

All research has limitations; no research is perfectly designed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers must define the weaknesses that impacted their study's results by identifying the limitations (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Limitations can be described as potential problems the researcher encountered while conducting the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Exposing the researcher's issues while conducting the study demonstrates the researcher understands these limitations exist (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The study limitations help the researcher identify future research areas, determine the level of conclusiveness about what the researcher has learned, and help the reader determine when to generalize the study results (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

A key limitation of the study was the small sample size. Eight parents total from the three study sites were selected using homogeneous sampling. The use of homogeneous sampling did not allow parents whose child(ren) had attendance rates that did not categorize the child(ren) as at risk for chronic absenteeism to participate in the study. The study limited the sample group to parents whose children were enrolled consecutively in one of the three school sites for the 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 school years and who was identified as at risk for chronic absenteeism during the 2020-2021 school year. Although eight interviews were conducted, yielding many

pages of transcripts, the experiences of all parents of students suffering from absenteeism were not considered.

The study did not consider the monthly attendance rates for the entire school year. The study specifically focused on student attendance data and the impact of the attendance interventions from September to December of the 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 school years. This limited the scope of the study to the first half of each school year and did not assess or address the needs or impact of the attendance interventions for the second half of the school year. Additionally, the 2020-2021 school year was not considered in the study due to the COVID 19 pandemic forcing schools to shift to virtual learning during the 2020-2021 school year.

Schools in the northeast sector of the city were the focus of the study. This served as a strength and a limitation. Focusing on schools with similar demographics in the northeast sector of the city may increase the likeliness of the recommendations shared in this study being implemented at other sites. However, the limited geographical scope of the study increased the difficulty in determining if the study results were generalizable to other parts of the city with slightly different demographics.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the research instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher's interactions with the participants are fundamental to the study's methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). A traditional qualitative researcher remains neutral while learning from the participant's lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). When the researcher is the instrument during the qualitative inquiry, claiming to be creditable is not enough (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Patton (2002) notes the credibility of qualitative reporting is dependent upon the use of rigorous methods, the credibility of the

researcher, and on the "fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking" (pp.552-553). When addressing debates about the soundness, validity, and generalization of a qualitative study, the researcher must rely on literature (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher must honor and respect the research site and participants by willingly and openly discussing his or her role in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

The researcher can be defined as a friend, leader, family-oriented individual, and educator who loves to travel. The researcher has worked in the education field for 19 years, with 15 years in leadership roles in urban school districts. Over the researcher's 19 years in education, the researcher has interacted with thousands of families and has assisted with developing districtwide interventions to address low student achievement and poor attendance. Additionally, the researcher is the product of an urban school district and faced many of the challenges students attending urban school districts face today. Therefore, the research topic was compelled by the researcher's personal and professional experience and desire to gain a better understanding of the parental perspective of the causes of absenteeism. The researcher aimed to add to the body of research that speaks to the causes of poor attendance in urban elementary schools.

There are two potential researcher-based threats to the validity of the study: bias and reactivity. Bias is the subjectivity of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). While it is impossible to eliminate the researcher's beliefs and perspectives, it is important to understand them and their impact on the study and its outcomes (Maxwell, 2013). Holding leadership roles in an urban school district for over 15 years gave the researcher strong beliefs in the need to address student attendance. To avoid bias, the researcher used respondent

validation as an attempt to minimize researcher bias while conducting this study. Respondent validation is a systemic approach to gather feedback about the study's data and conclusions from the study's participants (Maxwell, 2013).

Reactivity refers to the researcher's impact on the study's setting and participant (Maxwell, 2013). While Maxwell (2013) argued reactivity is not a serious threat in qualitative research and "trying to minimize your influence is not a meaningful goal" (p. 125), the researcher minimized reactivity by using reflexive notes and reframing from using leading questions that may have influenced the participants' responses (Maxwell, 2013).

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identified as preventing their children from attending school daily. Additionally, this study sought to identify potential strategies schools and school districts could put into place to better support families and improve student attendance in the early elementary grades. The study focused on how parents' perceptions and experiences with the schools impact their desire to send their elementary-aged child to school daily. If parental roles and desires are crafted as Kohn (1989), and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) described, the goal of this study was to identify the appropriate attendance intervention strategies to motivate parents to ensure their children attend school regularly. The researcher used parental voice data collected through interviews to fashion attendance interventions to improve student attendance. While academic standards increase in rigor, attending school daily becomes essential to ensure student success. As a result, not attending school daily has severe implications on chronically absent students' academic and social outcomes (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Every School Day, n.d.).

Restatement of the Problem

Chronic absenteeism in public K-12 schools is identified as a national crisis in the United States (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018; The Problem, n.d). More than 8 million students in grades K-12 are absent 15 or more school days each school year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018). Attending school daily is imperative to students' academic success, and successful futures (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016, McNeal, 2018).

This study narrows the focus of this research to Maryland, United States, a large urban school district that has not met the state's 94% attendance requirement for several years (MSDE, n.d.). The school district's attendance rate has fallen below the state's 94% requirement for more than five years (MSDE, n.d.). While academic standards increase in rigor, students attending school daily becomes increasingly imperative to ensure academic success (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Every School Day, n.d.). Research shows that students in acute disadvantage communities and areas of high poverty face challenges, such as, health concerns, poor social-economic conditions, and homelessness, which prevents them from attending school daily (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chang, 2016; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Ehrlich et al., 2016; Gase et al., 2016; Hancock et al., 2017).

Review of the Research Design

A research design is a roadmap used to define the procedures and research processes used to conduct a research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The research design integrates key steps for gathering, measuring, and analyzing data to adequately answer the study's research questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013).

This study was implemented using a qualitative research design. The qualitative researcher design allows the researcher to capture data rooted in the participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2016) claimed that qualitative research is valuable when conducting research that seeks to understand the experiences of the study's participants. This study aimed to use parental voice data to identify the parental perspective of student causes of student absenteeism in the elementary grades in an urban school district in the eastern United States.

The qualitative design allowed for a richer understanding of the daily experiences that influenced each parents' decision to send their son or daughter to school daily.

Research Questions and Emergent Themes

This study sought to understand the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism and potential opportunities or supports schools can offer to increase their parents' desire to send their children to school daily. The researcher's goal was to highlight the experiences and perceptions of eight parents of elementary-age children with poor attendance. Eight parents with various backgrounds represented the three schools that participated in this study. To explore the specific goals of the study, four qualitative research questions were developed. The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

This study's themes were obtained through individual structure interviews with each parent. Ten open-ended interview questions aligned with the four research questions were used to capture each parent's perception and experiences that impacted their desire to send their child(ren) to school.

The researcher organized the categories and themes using the study’s research questions. Aligning the themes and categories to the research questions using an epistemological approach aided the researcher in developing codes that aligned with the research questions. Saldana (2016) argued that epistemological questions “address theories of knowing and an understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 70). The epistemological approach with descriptive coding was beneficial in this study because it allowed the researcher to understand parental perceptions of chronic absenteeism better. Table 10 shows the themes and categories identified for each research question.

Table 10

Research Questions, themes, and categories

Research Question	Themes	Categories
1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child from attending school daily?	Access Difficult Mornings Health	Transportation Virtual Learning Lack of Sleep Lack of Preparation COVID Other Health Conditions
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child to school daily?	Past School Attendance Health Safety	Poor Attendance Good Attendance COVID Other Health Conditions Crime
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child to school daily?	Home School Connection	Resources Communication
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?	Wrap Around Services	Transportation Other Resources

The study participants provided insightful information during the individual interviews that illuminated the common themes based on their perspectives and previous experiences. A final interview question was added to allow the participants an opportunity to share any additional information or experiences the parent thought would add meaning to the study's focus.

Sampling Participants and Setting

The study's participants were parents and guardians of students in grades kindergarten to grade five attending school in the northeast sector of Baltimore City. The recruitment statement required participants to be parents or guardians of students who missed 19 or more school days during the 2019-2020 school year (see Appendix D). Every parent interviewed met the study's participation criteria. A total of eight parents were interviewed for this qualitative research study. The participants were selected from three schools in the northeast sector of Baltimore City. The schools share common demographics and similar overall attendance rates. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants. The age and educational backgrounds of the participants ranged from the early twenties to mid-forties and from earning a high school diploma to an education doctorate. All parents reported their children had attended the school at one of the school sites for at least three years.

Table 11*Participant Profile Information*

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Education Level	Years at School
Participant one	Female	21 - 25	High School Diploma	4
Participant two	Female	21 - 25	High School Diploma	4
Participant three	Female	41 - 45	Doctoral Degree	4
Participant four	Female	31 - 35	High School Diploma	2
Participant five	Female	31 - 35	Associate Degree	3
Participant six	Female	41 - 45	High School Diploma	3
Participant seven	Male	36 - 40	High School Diploma	2
Participant eight	Female	41 - 45	Master's degree	3

Results for Research Question One: What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?

Research states that students face various barriers that cause absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). Identifying and proactively addressing the cause of chronic absenteeism is vital to improving student attendance (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018). The participants in this study illuminated several themes that define the barriers that prevent the participants from sending their child(ren) to school daily. Transportation needs were identified as the leading barrier causing chronic absenteeism. To fully answer research question one, participants were asked to describe a typical morning preparing their child(ren) for school and their experience interacting with their child(ren)'s school. Table 12 details the themes, categories, and frequencies for research question one.

Table 12*Themes, Categories, and Frequencies for Research Question One*

Themes	Categories	Frequency
Access	Transportation	5 of 8 Participants
	Virtual Learning	2 of 8 Participants
Difficult Mornings	Lack of Desire	5 of 8 Participants
	Lack of Sleep	3 of 8 Participants
Health	COVID	5 of 8 Participants
	Other Health Conditions	4 of 8 Participants

Access. Seven of eight participants, or 87.5%, expressed access to school as a barrier that causes their child(ren) to miss school. More specifically, five participants named transportation as a significant barrier, while two called out virtual learning. The participants were asked what hinders them from sending their child(ren) to school daily. Each participant discussed obstacles that they face while attempting to access school daily. Participant two stated:

Ah. Like this quarter, some of the parents needed help with getting their kids to school on time, like as far as coming to pick the kids up like that because that's what my other son's school did. So, they helped me out because I don't have transportation for him, so sometimes I guess, like someone in their area, they'll come to pick him up and take him to school for me.

Participant five shared a similar experience by articulating:

I think it is an issue because some kids can't make it to school for different issues. It may be some parents that are like me, I'm a single parent, can't get your kids to school because you're sick or the other kids may be sick at home. Or, you know it's cold for them to stand at the bus stop to get them to school or you just don't have a car, so getting there.

Participant five explicitly shared transportation as a significant barrier that prevents their child from having perfect attendance:

Uhm, well school attendance, we tried to do perfect attendance, but since COVID, umm, we can't do perfect, and it's because of you know transportation, job, lack of hours. You know, you can't get your kids to and from school. If you're not working to put gas in your car, or you know, you know, you might miss work because you've been around someone diagnosed with COVID. Since the pandemic, it's been hard for us.

Two of eight participants, or 25%, articulated that schools not providing virtual learning opportunities prevent them from sending their child(ren) to school daily. The two participants highlighted the importance of schools offering an ongoing virtual option to prevent absenteeism due to various reasons, such as illness, safety, etc. Participant six explained that schools providing virtual opportunities would improve student attendance:

I mean, it all leads back as of right now; there's nothing that they can do outside of a virtual. I mean, I believe virtual attendance would be better virtually because parents would have less anxiety about sending their children to school for the possibility of what could happen. That's the only answer that I can give.

The voices of participants two, three, five, and six detailed the first-hand lived experience of parents of Baltimore City Public School students who struggle with access to school daily. These examples account for the lack of reliable transportation and a virtual option to access school.

Difficult Mornings. Eight of eight participants, or 100%, shared getting their child(ren) up in the morning was a struggle that caused their child(ren) to be late or miss school. The

findings fell into two categories, lack of desire and lack of sleep. Five of the eight participants shared their child(ren) does not desire to prepare for school in the morning. Participant one shared their morning experience:

The only issue that would really, you know, stop him as far with attendance would be he used to have problems falling asleep and staying up at night being a boy just staying up.

Participant two describes their child's reaction to preparing for school in the morning:

I am preparing him for school. I'm always getting him up for school, and he is like, I don't feel like going to school today. All this and that then I be like you're getting out of here.

Participant three shared that it's sometimes more convenient to allow her child to stay home because of the barriers they face in the morning:

Suppose we have a late night. Uhm, maybe working on her assignments or if we get in late and she doesn't get enough sleep. Uhm? If I have to report to work early and I'm not able to drive her to school, she doesn't really like catching the bus. And so sometimes I just don't make her. If I have a couple of dollars, I might send her in an Uber. But if I don't. Sometimes it's just more convenient just to let her catch up and get them mixed work the next day.

Participant five shared their daily struggle getting their child(ren) to attend school:

Uh, my typical morning is she moves like a turtle. She doesn't want to get up in the morning. So, you got to go back and forth in the room and make sure she's getting dressed. Uhm, I have to get dressed to try to get her to school on time. Uh, I'm trying to get breakfast in her, you know, if she doesn't like school

breakfast. It's a very busy morning. A typical morning is busy. Trying to get everybody out to school on time.

The experience and perspectives shared by participant one, participant two, participant three, and participant five gave insight into the difficulties parents face while preparing their children for school in the morning.

Health. Illness is a known cause of absenteeism (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). Amazingly, schools are less likely to offer students illness interventions and other supports (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). The study's participants shared their experiences and emphasized the lack of support from the schools participating in the study. Participant three shared their experiences with illness and school attendance:

She has a terrible menstrual cycle, so every month, on the 1st and 2nd day, she has a lot of pain and doesn't want to go to school. I'm outside of that. Sometimes she doesn't express interest in getting up. I talk to her about it to find out why, like is there an issue is their problem. You know extra questions, but she doesn't really give me any concrete answers. Some days I let her stay home. And some days I say you have to go to school.

Many participants shared their hesitation to send their children to school due to the COVID pandemic. Participant four shared their experience:

OK, Uhm, I believe it's essential, but the situation now with the pandemic and everything. I think it should be looked at lightly...Because I mean it is essential, but due to COVID, I think school officials need to know that there have been many changes in the household with parents, so I wouldn't say that it should be

overlooked. But I'm going to tell you it needs to be little leeway when it comes to attendance.

Participant one elaborated on their experience dealing with the fear of COVID and the common cold:

Uhm, I'll say that being that it's cold and COVID. Uh, so like, for instance, around between Octoberish and now, my son usually gets like a cold or a pink eye or something, and for me, we have allergies really bad as well. So, like, if I see any signs of allergy symptoms or anything, I don't send him because I don't want them to harass him thinking, oh, it's COVID or something, you know.

The lived experiences of participants three, four, and one create a well-described picture of the parental perception of how illness or the threat of illness influences their decision to send their children to school.

Results for Research Question Two: What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?

The study participants were asked to describe experiences that impacted their decision to send their children to school. Each participant shared experiences related to their past school attendance, health concerns, and safety. As a result, three major themes emerged: past school attendance, health, and safety. Table 13 details the themes, categories, and frequencies for research question two.

Table 13*Themes, Categories, and Frequencies for Research Question Two*

Themes	Categories	Frequency
Past School Attendance	Poor Attendance	7 of 8 Participants
	Good Attendance	1 of 8 Participants
Health	COVID	4 of 8 Participants
	Other Health Conditions	4 of 8 Participants
Safety	Crime	4 of 8 Participants

Past School Attendance. All eight participants discussed their attendance rates while in elementary school. The explanations range from having the authority to decide if they wanted to attend school to their parents requiring them to attend school daily. Seven out of the eight participants shared that they faced attendance concerns while in school. Participant three described their past school experiences related to attending school daily:

My mom left out early in the morning. So, she wasn't there when I left out to go to school. So, some days I wouldn't go, and some days I would. Most days, I would because I don't didn't want my mom to find out that I didn't go some days. It just really depended on if I was tired, and I just didn't feel like it; I didn't go. I guess for me, when I didn't go, I'm thinking about high school. When I didn't go, I would make up the work when I did go. I would still get good grades. With that said, I didn't necessarily have to be there every day to do well. So, I guess I kind of followed that same kind of thing with my daughter, like, as long as she makes up the work. You don't necessarily have to be there every single day.

Similarly, Participant four recalled their experience with attending school daily and having an underlining health concern.

It was good...I had an, oh...what I would say—health issues. As I got older, I had some health issues, but I would still say it was good, but it wasn't the best. I would say that it wasn't the best because I had health issues that caused me to miss days or caused me to have to check out of school early.

Participant five also recalled previous experiences that prevented them from attending school daily.

When I attended elementary school, my attendance wasn't perfect. Uh, because I may have a doctor's appointment or got sick. Uhm? Or my mom. She just didn't want to get up that day because she was ill and couldn't get us prepared for school.

Participant six recollected experiences related to transportation and attending a better school that caused them to exhibit poor attendance while in grade school.

That was a long time ago. Well, uh, uh, I want to say that I was there daily, frequently. Umm, we had transportation issues because I lived on one side of town and went to school on another, so I know that my attendance wasn't great. Based on where we resided, that was because they wanted me to go to a better school as opposed to the area that we lived in. So, they wanted me to go to a better school for a better education. They just couldn't get me there.

Participant seven expressed experiences relating to fitting in with other students and the lack of resources.

My attendance was fair, but half of the time, it was because, like, it was basically because I didn't want to go to school because I didn't have a circle, and I was like, well, I didn't look right, you know?

Participant eight clarified the impact of frequently transferring from one school to another.

I was just like a lot of these children here in the city. I was a transient kid, so I went to about six schools by the time I was in fifth grade. So, it was a challenge because you, you know my mother, would pull me out of school too. Try to go to my grandmother's house, or she pulled me out of school to do XYZ so I could tell you that I missed at least 14 days to 15 days a year. Oh, and then going to different schools at different times of the year.

In contrast with the other study participants, Participant 2 shared that they attended school daily. Participant two stated, “My attendance element school was great. I ain’t miss no days. I was there every day.”

Heath. Eight out of eight participants (100%) voiced experience with heath concerns as a barrier that prevented them from sending their child(ren) to school daily. During the interviews, two health-related themes emerged. Four out of eight participants (50%) voiced experiences with COVID as a barrier. Additionally, the other 50% (four out of eight) of the participants shared other health concerns that impeded their ability to regularly send their child(ren) to school. Participant seven gave insight into how schools should provide parents grace for school attendance during the COVID pandemic.

I do believe it is an issue because of what's going on in the world right now. If one child in the cafeteria has contracted COVID, then we're exposing, and we are risking all of the other children, so I definitely feel like attendance right now is an issue, and I understand why parents are reluctant to send their children because it's scary.

Participant six shared their experience and concerns with COVID and how COVID has indirectly impacted their ability to send their child(ren) to school.

My philosophy of school attendance. I feel as though school itself is important.

It's important for our children to learn, so it's needed. It's needed, but it can be hard. It's especially hard to want to send your children to school based on everything that's going on. I'm in my philosophy of attendance is important.

What's going on is COVID and a lot of sickness and deaths...

Participant one highlighted their primary concern with sending their child(ren) to school. "The only issue we really are having now is that they had a pipe burst and COVID."

Several participants named other health concerns a barrier preventing them from sending their child(ren) to school. Participant three shared other health concerns they face that prevent their child from attending school daily. Participant three states, "Like I said before, my daughter has a terrible menstrual cycle. So, she normally misses a few days at the beginning of each month." Participant 5 discussed the impact of illness on their ability to send their child(ren) to school daily. Participant five shared:

Yes, I think it is an issue because some kids can't make it to school for different issues. It may be some parents that are like me; I'm a single parent. Umm, you can't get your kids to school because you're sick, or the other kids may be sick at home. Or, you know it's cold for them to stand at the bus stop to get them to school, or you just don't have a car, so getting there.

Participant two gave insight on the types of illness their child faces that prevent them from sending their child to school.

My son gets constant ear infections. I want to send him to school, but he be in so much pain. If I send him to school, they're just going to send him back home. I take him to see a doctor for some medicine every time.

Safety. Four out of eight participants (50%) voiced safety as a concern. The reoccurring theme was the fear of violence. Participant one shared their concerns about neighborhood safety and its impact on sending their child to school.

You know, my environment, my home. So, I go through. I have anxiety, so like for me, I have things that may upset me in the neighborhood, you know, triggers. I will call them like I see certain individuals and stuff. I'm already on go mode, meaning like on guard because I've been through so much stuff. Climate harassment around here. So that's another thing. Another issue that had my son miss a few days in school.

Participant three elaborated on their experience related to safety and getting their child to school.

Sometimes she sends me videos of things that's happened on the bus, which doesn't make me feel so good either. So, I'm not too comfortable with her on the public bus. I would say transportation if she could get it. Transportation to pick her up and take her to school. Then I would say she definitely would be in school much more than she is right now.

Participant five shared a similar concern related to safety.

I would say sometimes it's difficult to get them to school. I would say if you are a parent, that doesn't allow the child to ride the bus. It's hard. You know, getting there. Your car might break down, or you might just not have the gas that you need to get them to school. Umm, the bus, you're scared to let them get on the

bus because people be kidnapping kids these days, and you know you just don't want to send them out in the dark waiting on the bus or in the cold.

Participant six shared their perceptions and fears of COVID, sickness, and the lack of trust in the school system. Participant six expressed safety concerns.

My philosophy of school attendance...I feel as though school itself is important.

It's important for our children to learn, so it's needed. It's needed, but it can be hard. It's especially hard to want to send your children to school based on everything that's going on. I'm in my philosophy of attendance is important.

What's going on is COVID and a lot of sickness and deaths, in addition to a lot of violence, in addition to a lot of uncertainty within the school systems, and not knowing if they can be trusted.

Results for Research Question Three: As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?

To answer research question three, the study's participants were asked to share their perception of what schools can put into place to assist with sending their child(ren) to school daily. The participants exemplified the importance of their children's schools building a robust home-school connection through structured interviews. The participants' responses fell into two major categories, resources, and communication. All eight of the participants gave strong examples of the type of resources and communication their child(ren)'s school should offer to improve their child(ren)'s attendance rate. Table 14 details the theme, categories, and frequencies for research question three.

Table 14*Themes, Categories, and Frequencies for Research Question Three*

Themes	Categories	Frequency
Home School Connection	Resources	7 of 8 Participants
	Communication	6 of 8 Participants

Resources. Seven out of eight parents emphasized the need for their child(ren)'s school to offer supportive resources to assist parents with getting their child(ren) to school daily and on time. Participant two shared their perception of the need for resources.

Uh, they can help out with the kids and make sure they get to school. Or make sure that they get there on time or probably try to help the parents out to get their children there; there's a lot of things that they probably could do to help the kids.

Participant three describes their family as a middle-class family and explains their family's transportation needs.

Just because I'm a middle-class parent, the assumption is that I can make arrangements and get to her school every day and on time, but I don't have it. The money to do Uber, and she doesn't want to get on the bus (public bus).

Like Participant two and three, Participant four shared ideas of what their child(ren)'s school could provide to improve their attendance.

They can improve. They can step in, and you know, help their parents. Like I was saying earlier, they can help their parents find better transportation to get the kids to school. And if they complain about the buses is not safe, I think they should find a resource like maybe getting a school van and come get the kids that parents need help. Do you want the kids in school? So, help the community.

Participant three shared that schools offering virtual learning would be a valuable resource to help parents improve their child(ren)'s attendance rates.

I would also say maybe virtual. Instruction as an option. Where she doesn't have to go in and physically. Uh. COVID has created that platform. But now that students are back face to face, it's kind of an eliminated that option. I think that maybe that option should be available for students that are not necessarily doing their best with getting to school daily and on time. When she just had to log in, she logged in on time. I think that one bodily presence in the classroom shouldn't necessarily be the goal. But more so student engagement and performance. And so, as I said, if virtual learning was an option that students are learning, and they're engaging. And I don't know why one should be seen as better than the other. I think that what we've learned during COVID is that you don't necessarily have to be physically present. A lot of things can happen virtually, and while virtual might not be good for every student, for some students, it is best.

Participant six also argued the need for a virtual learning option to get their child(ren) to attend school daily.

I mean, it all leads back. As of right now, there's nothing that they can do outside of a virtual. I mean, I believe virtual attendance would be better virtually because parents would have less anxiety about sending their children to school for the possibility of what could happen. That's the only answer that I can give.

Communication. Six out of eight (75%) parents offered regular two-way communication to allow schools to gain a better understanding of the school community's needs. Participant

three shared their experience with the lack of communication from their child(ren)'s school and what the school could do to better understand their needs.

They don't bother us again, like, that's it because she does her work and she's not a behavior problem. I guess maybe if they held one on one conferences to understand where I'm coming from and my concern specifically? And what my needs are. That would make me feel like they care or that they prefer for her to be there in person, but minus those conversations and conferences. I just feel like what we're doing right now. It's fine.

Participant five agreed that their child(ren)'s school could reach out more to parents to seek their input on improving student attendance. Participant 5 stated, "They can reach out to all parents for their input and concerns, and maybe they can use their ideas and try to come up with some resources to actually make it happen."

Participant eight gave insight on what schools should do to assist parents proactively.

Again, going back out to be more interpersonal, being more proactive versus reactive and asking people to help to ask them what they think, and giving parents a voice, I think will be helpful in the start to improve that process. But again, I'm coming from my perspective, but I just think communication is important, especially to, you know, single parents and people that are just doing the best they can.

Participant four verbalized a viewpoint similar to the other study participants.

I would say reaching out more, you know, really looking at my situation to provide the help I need and getting her to and from school. I see that there are many policies. We have many situations, especially as a single parent of not able

or I don't have those resources. So, I would say the school looking into and talking to parents about their situations more to see and go deep into the situation to see what they can do to help. That would be helpful?... Uhm, I would say have more parent meetings and talk to them to understand from the parents' point of view. Uhm, that's with Gardenville and worldwide. Getting their parents' point of view, getting their ideas, getting their feedback in a lot of situations. I think that would be very helpful because you have parents that know what they need. They don't have the resources or anything. You know, when there's no one that they can talk to, or there's no one that will listen, it's like the situation goes unresolved. So, I would say meeting maybe conference calls. Maybe conferences, you know, pretty much lifted to whatever it would take to help because I think once they get to the point to where they can talk and figure out solutions or whatever attendance will improve.

The theme of a strong home-school connection came through in the perspectives shared by all eight participants. Each participant used their personal experience with school attendance and interaction with their child(ren)'s school to provide insight on what schools can do to influence parents to send their child(ren) to school daily.

Results for Research Question Four: How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

The study's participants were asked to describe what partnerships schools should develop to assist parents with improving their son or daughter's attendance through the interview process. In their answer to the structured interview questions, each participant responded that wrap-around supports played an enormous role in their child(ren)'s attendance. The wrap-around

support described by the participants fell within two categories, transportation, and other resources. Table 15 details the themes, categories, and frequencies for research question four.

Table 15

Themes, Categories, and Frequencies for Research Question Four

Themes	Categories	Frequency
Wrap Around Supports	Transportation	4 of 8 Participants
	Other Resources	4 of 8 Participants

Transportation. Four out of eight participants highlighted the need for their child(ren)'s school to offer transportation services. Many of the participants shared stories about the barriers they face while attempting to transport their child(ren) to school. Participant five details the type of partnerships they need their child(ren) school to develop.

I mean if attendance is a problem, I think they can reach out to the community and found different ways to help parents that don't have transportation to take the child to school or put up someone on the bus stops to watch your kids get on the bus when their parents can't.

Participant two shared that some parents need help getting their children to school. Participant two shared resources another child's school offered and agreed that the school participating in this study should provide the same.

Ah. Like this quarter like, some of the parents needed help with getting their kids to school on time, like as far as coming to pick the kids up like that because that's what my other son's school did. So, they helped me out because I don't have transportation for him, so sometimes I guess, like someone in their area, they'll come to pick him up and take him to school for me.

Other Resources. Four out of eight participants highlighted needs other than transportation. Participant one shared their perspective of the need for extending learning programs at their child(ren)'s school.

I would say offering more extended programs, so I mean like you know how? Excuse my words; you know how like when we were children, we used to have stuff like recreation, or they can go to where they need tutoring or playing a game. Or have one-on-one time because some children maybe, you know only children and your only child. You know some people may suffer from only child syndrome sometime so like I would say you know opening opportunities as far as like recreation type of activities.

Participant five shared an experience when the school failed at offering resources to assist with their needs which caused their child to miss school.

I would say in the beginning, but when it got to the point where I needed the help, I needed the resources. Uh, when it came down to my daughter getting into school, her attendance would be good if they help. I would say my experience was not good at all. I'm very displeased. I'm dissatisfied with the help that I got from Gardenville Elementary.

Summary

The research was conducted on the lived experience and perceptions of parents of grade school students with a history of chronic absenteeism. The researcher applied a phenomenological research theory directed by the interview process. Through the data analysis, seven themes emerged: 1) Access, 2) Difficult Mornings, 3) Health, 4) Past School Attendance,

5) Safety, 6) Home School Connection, 7) Wrap Around Supports. Additionally, the eight study participants provided examples of lived experiences that impact their child(ren)'s attendance.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Chronic absenteeism in public K-12 schools is a problem that has plagued schools across the United States (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018; The Problem, n.d). More than 8 million students in grades kindergarten to grade twelve are absent from school 15 or more each academic year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018). The obsessively high number of students missing school regularly has made chronic absenteeism a “national crisis” (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018; The Problem, n.d). Past researchers have found that students who attend school regularly are more likely to meet academic success and are better prepared for social engagement (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016, McNeal, 2018).

Proactively identifying the causes of chronic absenteeism is imperative (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018). Studies have shown that absenteeism in the early elementary grades predicts student attendance throughout their academic career (Robinson et al., 2018). This finding makes it extremely important for schools to identify the causes of chronic absenteeism and provide the appropriate interventions (Huskins, 2019). Determining the exact cause of chronic absenteeism can be challenging as students and families face numerous circumstances that contribute to absenteeism (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). As a result, schools must find ways to familiarize themselves with the causes of chronic absenteeism in their unique school

communities (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016; Sahin et al., 2016).

The study's participants consisted of eight parents of elementary students who are classified as at risk for chronic absenteeism. The participants' experiences and perceptions were shared through structured interviews using open-ended questions to allow the participants to share their personal experiences and perceptions regarding the causes of chronic absenteeism. Chapter five of this study will explore the significant findings and conclusions derived from the participants' perspectives.

Summary of the Results

This qualitative study aimed to gain insight into the parental perspective of the cause of chronic absenteeism. To guide the research, social constructionism served as the theoretical framework. Additionally, the social constructionism frame was used to examine the participant experiences that impacted their decision to send their child(ren) to school daily. The following research questions drove the research:

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting the perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

The eight study participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Each participant's response was transcribed and coded to find themes across interviews. The coding process allowed the researcher to identify themes and categories aligned with the study's research questions. The seven themes that arose are 1) access, 2) difficult mornings, 3) health, 4) past school attendance, 5) safety, 6) home school connection, and 7) wrap-around services.

Access. Interviews with the eight participants, parents of students at risk for chronic absenteeism, produced responses that highlighted the impact of access on student attendance. Using open-ended questions, these interviews yielded two categories for access: transportation and virtual learning. Five of eight participants discussed the lack of resources to get their child(ren) to school daily, the importance of school providing reliable transportation to help students and families access to school, and its impact on student success. Two of eight participants voiced that schools offering a virtual learning option would allow students to access daily instruction. The participants shared their perceptions of the real-life experiences, struggles, and lack of resources they face that prevent them from getting their children to school. Research has shown that socio-economic factors harm student attendance (Chang & Romero, 2008; Sugrue et al., 2016).

Difficult Mornings. Difficult mornings emerged as a significant theme in the participants' responses. Eight participants shared difficulties getting their child(ren) prepared to attend school during the interviews. Two categories emerged in the collective responses: lack of desire and sleep. Five of eight participants shared that they struggle to get their child(ren) prepared and attend school daily. They verbalized that their child(ren) does not desire to attend school. Three of eight participants shared that their children do not get sufficient sleep, which causes their child(ren) not to want to attend school. The lived experiences of the study

participants validated the struggles and hurdles parents face daily to get their child(ren) to attend school daily. Research has shown that school refusal is a concern that falls on a spectrum that occurs with students between 5 to 17 years of age (Kearney & Bates, 2005; Kearney & Silverman, 1996).

Health. The impact of health concerns was a reoccurring theme throughout the participant interviews. Eight of eight participants expressed health concerns as a cause of their child(ren)'s absents. Two major health concerns emerged from the interview transcripts: COVID and other health concerns. This study's findings aligned with the existing body of research. Illness is a contributor to chronic absenteeism (Canfield et al., 2019; Hysing et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2019). The participants' concerns aligned to the current body of research that suggests schools are not meeting the needs of students with illnesses which causes the student to suffer

Past School Attendance. The participants' past school attendance arose across every interview. The participants' experiences ranged from having the authority to decide whether they attended school to their parents requiring them to attend daily. Two major categories emerged: poor attendance and good attendance. Seven of eight participants described their past school attendance as poor. The seven participants' experiences aligned with past research that suggests student refusing or bargaining to avoid attending school is a school refusal behavior that causes chronic absenteeism (Hancock et al., 2017; Kearney & Silverman, 1996; London et al., 2016; Mullvain, 2016). Kohn (1989) argued that parental perceptions are defined by their personal experiences; therefore, the participants' past experiences with school refusal influenced their child(ren)'s school attendance.

Safety. The safety theme became a significant component of the participants' statements throughout the interviews. The participants stipulated a reoccurring theme of the fear of crime while taking their child(ren) to school. The participants' lived experiences' dialogue validated the impact of neighborhood crime and violence on the parental perception of the importance of attending school daily. The transcripts contained numerous examples and first hand testimonies that spoke to the magnitude of the impact of safety on parents sending their child(ren) to school. Research supports the participants' voice that security is essential in reducing chronic absenteeism.

Home School Connection. Discussions with the eight participants produced responses that highlighted the importance of the home-school connection on student attendance. Eight of eight participants reference the lack of a strong relationship with their child(ren)'s schools impacted their decision to send their child(ren) to school. Two categories emerged: resources and communication. The participants' lived experiences corroborated the importance of the need for schools to provide resources and regular two-way communication with their parents to reduce chronic absenteeism (Hancock et al., 2017; London et al., 2016; Mullvain, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016; Wallace, 2017).

Wrap-around Services. Wrap-around services materialized as a theme across the eight participants' interviews. The participants lived experiences fell within two categories: transportation and other resources. Four of eight participants emphasized the need for their child(ren)'s school to provide transportation as a resource to get their child(ren) to school daily. The four participants shared their daily struggle with getting their child(ren) to school daily and on time. They highlighted how the lack of transportation often prevented them from sending their child(ren) to school. Additionally, four of eight parents verbalized their perception of the

need for other resources, such as one-on-one support, tutoring, etc. Research supports the participants' claims that schools must help students and families decrease chronic absenteeism (Hancock et al., 2017; London et al., 2016; Mullvain, 2016).

Results for Research Question One: What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?

A primary purpose of this investigation was to identify the significant barriers parents of elementary school students face that prevent their child(ren) from attending school daily. Studies have shown that parents face various obstacles that prevent them from sending their child(ren) to school every day (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016). The findings of this study provided a connection between the daily barriers parents face sending their child(ren) to school and chronic absenteeism. During the investigation, three major themes emerged: access, difficult mornings, and health.

Social constructionism theory provided the foundation upon which this research question was created. The social constructionism framework highlights how the participants' past experiences shaped their decision to send their child(ren) to school when faced with barriers (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Each participant described their experiences that prevented their child(ren) from accessing school. The participants' responses fell into two access categories: transportation and virtual learning. Most participants stressed the need for their child(ren)'s school to provide regular, reliable transportation to and from school for their child(ren) and argued that if transportation were provided, their child(ren) would be in school daily. Additionally, the participants discussed the need for their child(ren)'s school to offer a virtual learning option.

Secondly, the participants gave insight into their daily struggles convincing their children to attend school. The participants' responses fell into two categories: lack of desire and lack of sleep. Many shared experiences that highlighted the frequency of their child(ren) simply refusing to attend school or due to their child(ren) staying up late and not getting enough sleep. Research supports the participants' statements regarding their children refusing to attend school (Hancock et al., 2017; Kearney & Silverman, 1996; London et al., 2016; Mullvain, 2016). Finally, the participants shared their past experiences with illnesses causing their child(ren) to miss school. The participants' responses fell into two categories: COVID and other health concerns. The literature established concrete evidence that the participants shared lived experiences directly impacted their decision to send their child(ren) to school (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019).

Results for Research Question Two: What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting the perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?

The investigation into the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism is significant as the participants were parents of children who suffer from chronic absenteeism. Each participant highlighted the parental experiences that negatively impact them and prevent them from sending their children to school. Three major themes emerged: past school attendance, health, and safety.

The participants shared their childhood experiences related to school attendance while enrolled in an urban elementary school. Those experiences help to shape the participants' perceptions regarding school attendance (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). All but one participant shared poor attendance while in elementary school. It was apparent that the participants' past experiences strongly impacted their decisions to send their child(ren) to school. The participants shared stories about their parents' struggles getting them to

attend school. The option to miss school for various reasons was shared across the participants' accounts. The social constructionism framework highlights the impact of the participants' past experiences on their decision to send their child(ren) to school (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019).

Additionally, the participants' fear of neighborhood and school bus violence impacted their decision to send their child(ren) to school. The participants shared past experiences of witnessing violence in their communities as they walked their children to school or incidents of violence on school buses. The participants used those experiences to determine if their child(ren) should attend school (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). Despite the participants' belief in the importance of school attendance, their fear for their child(ren)'s safety outweighed their desire to send their children to school. The participants suggested that the school provide reliable transportation with trained staff to ensure the proper climate on culture on the school buses.

Results for Research Question Three: As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?

A chief goal of the investigation into the parental perspective of the cause of chronic absenteeism was to identify targeted strategies to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily. Chronic absenteeism affects children's social and academic development (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016, McNeal, 2018). Identifying the exact cause of chronic absenteeism can be challenging since there are numerous reasons parents face that prevent them from sending their children to school (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Gottfried, 2010; Havik et al., 2015; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Sahin et al., 2016).

This study explored what schools can put into place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily. The participants gave first-hand knowledge of what experiences, or the lack thereof, hindered them from sending their children to school. The participants shared that schools creating a solid home-school connection would influence their perception of the importance of sending their children to school. Building a solid home-school relationship was divided into resources and communication.

School creating strong home-school connections would allow parents to experience collaboratively working with their children's school. Based on social constructionism theory, parents working in collaboration with schools would create new experiences that could alter the parents' perception of the importance of teaming with their child(ren)'s schools to reduce chronic absenteeism. The participants argued that schools building a solid home-school connection would allow more opportunities for parents and school staff to collaborate and brainstorm attendance interventions that address the unique needs of the school community. Research suggests that schools must identify the root causes of chronic absenteeism and develop appropriate interventions that specifically address each root cause (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Cole, 2017; Huskins, 2019; London et al., 2016). School developing regular opportunities for parents to dialogue with school staff is vital in identifying the root causes and deciding on which resources would best meet the needs of their parents and students. Six of eight participants describe communication as the primary avenue for schools to identify significant resources to meet their needs.

Results for Research Question Four: How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

The social constructionism framework suggests parents' perceptions of chronic absenteeism are shaped by participation in various experiences and interactions that mold their

perspective of the importance of, and tools needed for regular school attendance (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). The research participants accredited schools building partnerships with organizations that can provide resources to remove the barriers preventing them from sending their children to school. Each member of the investigation gave passionate examples of what their child(ren)'s school could provide to reduce chronic absenteeism. The theme wrap-around services emerged as a tool to remove the barriers that prevented them from sending their children to school. Schools providing wrap-around services were divided into transportation and other resources.

Four of eight participants shared that schools developing partnerships to provide transportation would reduce the barriers they face while transporting their children to school. While schools work diligently to reduce chronic absenteeism, schools must provide opportunities for parents to share their needs to help school refocus their attendance efforts. Schools must clearly understand the root causes of chronic absenteeism within their school communities to redirect school-based funding and determine partnership needs. Additionally, four of eight participants shared that schools must provide other resources to meet their needs. The participants highlighted instances when they reached out to the school for support, but the school failed to respond. Research suggests that schools developing a positive relationship with parents at the start of the school builds better communications (Wilson, 2018).

A Researcher's Reflection

As an educator who can identify with the barriers that hinder children from attending school, this unique opportunity to investigate the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism in the urban elementary setting presented itself. Using a social constructionism frame, the researcher developed research questions, interview questions, and explored and

analyzed scholarly literature, to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the eight study participants. Research shows that parental perceptions are defined by personal experiences over the parent's lifespan (Kohn, 1989). Through listening to the participants' stories of daily events and barriers, the researcher formed a new respect for the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism. The researcher could understand how the daily obstacles parents of elementary-aged children faced hindered the participants from sending their child(ren) to school daily. The semi-structured interviews provided a clear picture of their lived experiences and insight into possible school-based attendance interventions.

Recommendation for Future Research

Through the perspectives and lived experiences of parents with children at risk for chronic absenteeism, this phenomenological qualitative study sought to determine the parental view of the causes of chronic absenteeism. Additionally, the researcher sought to identify possible attendance interventions using the parental perspective of the root cause of poor attendance. Parental view and the causes of chronic absence is are terms rarely used in the same sentence. Therefore, an increase in research needs to occur to investigate the impact of schools implementing attendance interventions based on the required resources identified by their student parents. Future research can achieve a solution to dissolve the national crisis of chronic absenteeism. The voice of the eight participants that offered their lived experiences and perspectives opened the door for schools to increase parental engagement and see the actual needs and barriers that prevent students from attending school in urban elementary schools.

There is a need to examine the parental perspectives of the causes of chronic absenteeism in urban middle and high schools. The participants in this study were parents of students in grades one through five. Identifying the parental perspectives of the causes of chronic

absenteeism in urban middle and high schools would allow future researchers to identify commonalities and differences across all grade bands. Identifying the similarities and differences would enable school districts to determine high-impact districtwide attendance interventions. In addition, future researchers need to consider the reimagined forms of schooling because of the COVID pandemic. This would include the technological advancement implemented to adapt to the changes in society.

In this study, the researcher solicited participant schools from the northeast sector of the urban school district. While narrowing the study participants to a single city sector was beneficial for this study, examining the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism in other city sectors would allow future researchers to identify common themes across every sector served by the urban school district. In addition, widening the geographical scope would decrease the difficulty in determining if the findings are generalizable in all city sectors.

Finally, there is a need to examine the impact of providing transportation for elementary-aged students identified as chronically absent. The study's findings yielded several themes that cause chronic absenteeism. Transportation was verbalized as a constant through-line that would potentially remedy most obstacles the study's participants faced that prevented them from sending their children to school daily. Exploring the impact of schools offering students characterized as chronically absent with reliable transportation is an area for future research.

The investigation has yielded an impressive amount of information on the parental perspective of chronic absenteeism. Coupled with the suggestions for future research, one can better understand the causes of chronic absenteeism to improve student attendance.

Implications for Professional Practice

The research gathered on the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism in this investigation provided urban schools with opportunities to strategically improve student attendance. The participants, parents of students at risk for chronic absenteeism, provided personal experiences and ideas for potential interventions to improve student attendance. Research has shown that students in urban areas miss 15 or more school days each year (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018). The United States Department of Education has identified chronic absenteeism as a national crisis (Allison & Attisha, 2019; Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools, n.d; Swaak, 2018).

The study participants spoke about the need for the schools to provide supports that address the barriers parents and students face in their community. Research states that schools must proactively respond to chronic absenteeism by offering parents and students the proper support to win the fight to reduce absenteeism (Gottfried, 2010; Huskins, 2019; Robinson et al., 2018). Yet, despite the research, schools still fail to offer parents and students the proper support to reduce absenteeism. Implementing parent and student-centered attendance interventions can enhance parental engagement and improve student attendance. In addition, schools need to become and remain advocates for targeted resources to break down the barriers that prevent students from attending school. It is not what the school thinks parents need, but what the parents say they need. Both schools and parents must fulfill this saying and set a path for students to meet academic success by reducing absenteeism.

The potential benefit from this study's findings helped identify possible attendance intervention themes for students at risk for chronic absenteeism. The central themes of this study have shown schools must address:

- Access

- Difficult mornings
- Health
- Past school attendance
- Safety
- Home school connection
- Wrap-around services

Schools and school districts must see that development opportunities for parents to share their lived experiences and perspectives are vital in determining the best attendance interventions for their school communities. With increased parental engagement, students at risk for chronic absenteeism will improve their attendance.

The school-based administrator of the schools participating in this study expressed interest in receiving the results to use as a tool to develop meaningful, targeted attendance interventions. Therefore, the researcher will share the study results to allow the participating school to create strategic action plans to improve student attendance rates. The interventions may include focus groups with parents of students classified as chronically absent and partnering with community agencies.

Conclusion

The social constructionism theoretical framework provided a solid foundation for investigating the parental perspective of the causes of chronic absenteeism. The social constructionism framework suggests that our perspectives are shaped by experiences and interactions that shape our reality (Bell, n.d.; Burr, 2015; Chang, 2018; DiCiccio, 1988; Mallon, 2019). The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting the perception of schools and their desire to send their child(ren) to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child(ren) to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

Eight of the eight participants (100%) are parents of students characterized as at risk for chronic absenteeism. Participants shared their lived experiences and perceptions that cause chronic absenteeism through individual interviews. Seven significant themes merged from the interviews: access, difficult mornings, health, past school attendance, safety, home school connection, and wrap-around services. The eight participants shared strong feelings about what schools should do to reduce chronic absenteeism. While the participating schools all implemented attendance interventions before the study, the participants (parents) argued that schools partnering with their parent groups would help schools create interventions that meet their students' and parents' needs.

The eight participants' testimonies reiterated the importance of each theme while developing attendance interventions. The participants were able to give insight into the lived experiences of parents of students with chronic absences. As the interviews evolved, the need for schools to provide transportation for chronically absent students appeared as a through line to remedy most attendance barriers. Reliable transportation would allow parents to overcome the safety barrier by removing the need for students to travel through high crime areas while walking to and from school. Additionally, schools providing transportation would allow students access to school when parents cannot personally get their children to school for various reasons (i.e., illness, work schedules, etc.). The Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation has modified the funding formula for school districts in Maryland (Priority issue: The blueprint for Maryland's future, 2022). As a result, many Maryland schools now have the funding to purchase sixteen passenger vans or school buses to offer their students transportation. Based on the study participants' recommendations, individual schools' ability to buy transportation would bridge the transportation gap and promote improved daily student attendance. District leadership must develop guidance to support schools with purchasing vans and school buses as a district-wide effort to improve student attendance.

Many people associate students' poor attendance with having parents who do not see attending school as a priority. Still, the eight study participants painted a new picture of the day-to-day events that prevent them from sending their child(ren) to school daily. Each of the themes listed blended to highlight the parental perception of chronic absenteeism causes and identify potential interventions to improve student attendance. The eight participants' testimonies reiterated the importance of each theme and the schools' need to develop targeted interventions to support their parents in strengthening their child(ren) 's attendance. The participants were eager

to share their stories of frustration, hardship, and lack of school-based resources. This study's findings outlined why parents allowed their child(ren) to miss school, including the logic used to make the decision.

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Appendix A

Qualitative Informed Consent

A. Purpose and Background

I am currently a doctorate student at Northwest Nazarene University, and I am conducting a research study to determine the impact of parental involvement on student daily attendance rates. The purpose of this research study is to create a strategic model, develop school-based attendance goals, and fashion possible solutions to improve student daily attendance rates through enhanced parental involvement in a cohort of elementary schools in an urban school district in Maryland. I appreciate your involvement in equipping principals and schools in meeting their students' and parents' needs.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are over the age of 18, and you fit the criteria for the study.

B. Procedures

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.
2. You will participate in one individual interview. The interview will occur between June 2021 and June 2022. The interviews will be recorded and expected to take approximately 60 minutes.
3. After the interview has been disseminated, you will be asked to read the write-up to ensure that the information is correct.

C. Risks/Discomforts

There is minimal risk involved if you volunteer for this research. You will not be identified in the research, and all interview responses will be kept confidential, with all data being secured on a password-protected computer.

Some of the questions during the interview may make you uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time. There will be no compensation for your participation in this study; however, everyone who completes the study will be entered into a non-monetary raffle.

D. Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help principals/schools offer meaningful attendance interventions to improve student daily attendance (ADA).

E. Payments

There are no payments for participating in this study; however, participants who complete the

student will be entered into a non-monetary raffle.

F. Questions

If you have any questions or concerns about participation in this study, please feel free to contact the research investigator, Anthony Felder. He can be reached at 443.413.3942; email at anthonyfelder@nnu.edu. You may also contact his Faculty Advisor, Dr. Bethani Studebaker via email at bstudebaker@nnu.edu.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this study, you should contact your health care provider.

G. Consent

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participation in research is voluntary. You are free to decline to be in this study or to withdraw from it at any point. This research study has been approved by the Northwest Nazarene University Institutional Review Board in May 2021, approval # 0285.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for the interview to be audio taped in this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No personal identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

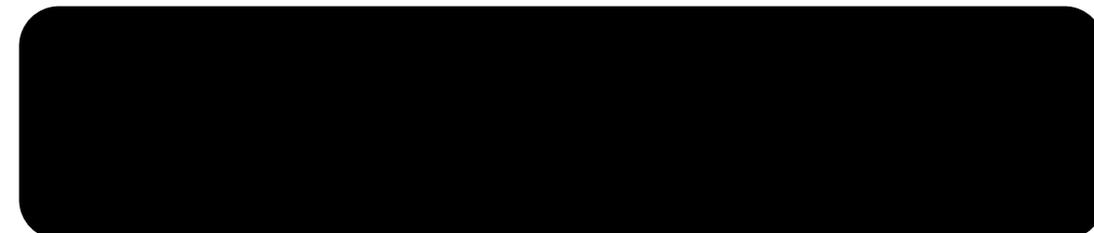
Signature of Study Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix B
Research Proposal Site Access Letters



June 4, 2021

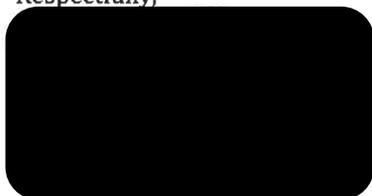
Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: Institutional Review Board
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

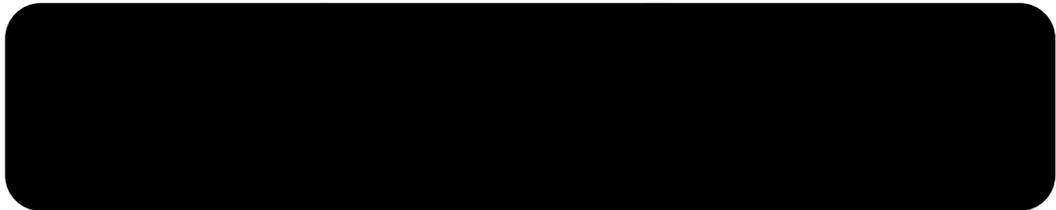
RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Anthony S. Felder

Dear Institutional Review Board Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that [REDACTED] Public Schools has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Anthony S. Felder has permission to conduct his research study at [REDACTED] Elementary School. The authorization dates for this research study are June 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

Respectfully,





June 4, 2021

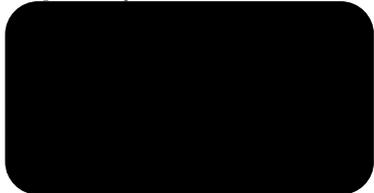
Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: Institutional Review Board
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Anthony S. Felder

Dear Institutional Review Board Members:

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Respectfully,





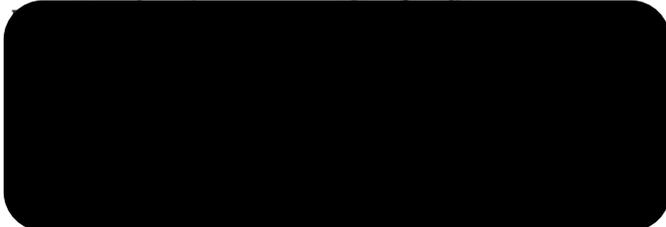
June 4, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: Institutional Review Board
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Anthony S. Felder

Dear Institutional Review Board Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB that [REDACTED] Public Schools has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Mr. Anthony S. Felder has permission to conduct his research study at [REDACTED] Elementary School. The authorization dates for this research study are June 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.



Appendix C

Parental interview Questions and Protocol

Research Questions

1. What major barriers do parents of elementary school children in the Baltimore City school district articulate as preventing their child from attending school daily?
2. What experiences do parents state are negatively impacting perception of schools and their desire to send their child to school daily?
3. As articulated by parents, what can schools put in place to influence parental perceptions of the importance of sending their child to school daily?
4. How can schools strategically build partnerships to support families to improve attendance in the early elementary grades?

Interviewee's School _____ Date _____
 Interview Number _____

Script: This is Anthony Felder. Today is [date]. It is currently [time] and I am here in [location] with [interviewee's school and group number]. We will be discussing the parental perspective of the causes of absenteeism and potential ways to improve student attendance.

1. Please tell me about yourself. What is the current grade of your child(ren)?
2. What is your philosophy on school attendance?
3. Do you believe student attendance is a concern at [name of school]? Why or why not?
4. Describe a typical morning as you prepare your child(ren) for school.
5. Is it difficult getting your child(ren) to attend school? Why or why not?
6. How was your attendance when you attended elementary school? Why?
7. What is your understanding of [name of school] attendance policy?
8. How would you describe your experiences and interactions with [name of school]?
9. What resources and supports can [school name] offer to improve your child(ren)'s attendance?
10. What can [name of school] do to effectively engage parents in a process to determine schoolwide and targeted attendance intervention?

Appendix D

Electronic School Recruiting Email

Greetings,

My name is Anthony Felder. I am Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University studying the parental perspective of the causes of student absenteeism. You are receiving this email because your school has been identified as a school that would add great value to the study.

I am seeking ten parents who are willing to participate in a 60-minute interview discussion to share their perspective of the cause of absenteeism. The interview questions will focus their experiences and your beliefs about the causes of student attendance and parent engagement. Their identity will be confidential throughout the study.

To participate in this study, the participant must be at least 18 years of age, have at least one child enrolled consecutively at your school for school year 2019-2020 through school year 2021-2022, and their child must be identified as at-risk for chronic absenteeism during the 2019-2020 school year

If you are willing to assist, please identify ten parents suitable for the study. Thank you in advance,

Anthony S. Felder

Appendix E

Electronic Participant Recruiting Email

Greetings,

Anthony Felder, a Doctoral Student at Northwest Nazarene University, is studying the parental perspective of the causes of student absenteeism. You are receiving this email because you have been identified as a parent who would add great value to the study.

Anthony Felder is seeking parents who will be willing to participate in a 60-minute interview discussion to share their perspective of the cause of absenteeism. The interview questions will focus on your experiences and your beliefs about student attendance and parent engagement. Your identity will be confidential throughout the study.

If you are willing to participate in this study that will assist our school gain a better understanding of the cause of absenteeism, please reply to this email to confirm your interest.

Email address:

Phone number:

Appendix F

Debrief Statement/Data Accuracy Follow-up

Thank you for participating in this study.

I will be analyzing the data over the next several weeks. After organizing and reviewing data, I will email you and ask for your feedback. My main purpose in following up is to ensure that results accurately reflect our interview and your thoughts. This study will conclude by December 31, 2021.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Anthony Felder via email at anthonyfelder@nmu.edu or via cellphone at:

Thank you again for participating!

Anthony Felder
Doctoral Student
Northwest Nazarene University
IRB Application# 0285

Appendix G

Data Verification Form

Greetings,

Thank you for participating in the attendance interviews. As a reminder, this qualitative study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers elementary school parents identify as preventing their child(ren) from attending school daily. Below you will find the significant themes that arose during your interview. If you find an error or feel the data is not a clear reflection of the information shared during your interview, please contact me at Anthony.felder@nnu.edu or 443.413.3942. Thank you again for your participation.

Question	Major Interview Themes
1. Please tell me about yourself. What is the current grade of your child(ren)?	
2. What is your philosophy on school attendance?	
3. Do you believe student attendance is a concern at [name of school]? Why or why not?	
4. Describe a typical morning as you prepare your child(ren) for school.	
5. Is it difficult getting your child(ren) to attend school? Why or why not?	
6. How was your attendance when you attended elementary school? Why?	
7. What is your understanding of [name of school] attendance policy?	
8. How would you describe your experiences and interactions with [name of school]?	
9. What resources and supports can [school name] offer to improve your child(ren)'s attendance?	
10. What can [name of school] do to effectively engage parents in a process to determine schoolwide and targeted attendance intervention?	

Appendix H

Northwest Nazarene University IRB Approval



Anthony Felder <anthonyfelder@nnu.edu>

Status update from Northwest Nazarene University

1 message

Northwest Nazarene University <reply-to+8e373fef-fd02-431d-b5dd-e6ce48226aee@email.submittable.com>
To: anthonyfelder@nnu.edu

Mon, Jun 14, 2021 at 10:54 PM

Submittable 

Dear Anthony,

The IRB has reviewed your protocol: 0285: PARENTAL VOICE AND ITS IMPACT ON MITIGATING THE CAUSES OF STUDENT ABSENTEEISM; A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON POTENTIAL ATTENDANCE INTERVENTIONS IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. You received "Full Approval". Congratulations, you may begin your research. If you have any questions, let me know.

Heidi Curtis
Northwest Nazarene University
IRB Member
623 S University Blvd
Nampa, ID 83686

[REPLY](#)

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Sent by [Submittable](#).

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