

Student Work

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**The attendance program at Thomas Jefferson High School,
Council Bluffs, Iowa.**

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THE ATTENDANCE PROGRAM
AT THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

A Field Project
Presented to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

by
James O. Howard
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of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfill-
ment of the requirements for the Specialist Degree in
Education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Importance of the Study	2
Description of Terms Used	2
Absenteeism	2
Attendance Records	2
Dropout	3
Bona fide	3
Fifteen Day Removal	3
Referral Report	3
Excused Absence	3
Unexcused Absence	4
Truant	4
Major Assumptions	4
Limitations	5
The Procedure	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH	6
III. DESCRIPTION OF THE ATTENDANCE PROGRAM	14
IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA	22
Introduction	22
Data	22

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
Summary	27
The Study	27
Observations	28
Conclusions	29
Recommendations	30
Inclusion of all Involved	30
Day Limit	30
Accurate Record Keeping	31
Faculty and Student Handbooks	31
Parent Awareness	31
APPENDICES	32
APPENDIX A. Keokuk Committee on Attendance	33
APPENDIX B. Attendance Program Submitted to Council Bluffs Community Schools	38
APPENDIX C. Attendance Booklet - Inside Cover	39
APPENDIX D. Faculty Handbook Attendance Section	42
APPENDIX E. Student Handbook Attendance Section	44
APPENDIX F. Letter to Parents	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

One of the most complex facts in education today is the continuous problem concerning the number of dropouts throughout the United States.

In the book Profile of the School Dropout, the editor tells us "The school dropout problem is no new phenomenon on the American educational scene. Indeed for much the greater part of public education history, the dropout has been as much a part of the fabric of national life as the high school graduate. The dropout has suddenly become a problem because, among the range and number of jobs requiring little formal education it has drastically diminished. And his predominance has become all the more visible, as more and more people accommodate themselves to the nearly complete dominance of formal education as the major path of fulfillment."¹

Because Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa, fits into this category with a dropout rate of 15.86 percent in 1971, it was decided by all concerned; students, parents, and teachers that a program needed to be designed to help decrease this dropout rate. With the diligent help of many, a program was created to help reduce the dropout and absentee rate among students at Thomas Jefferson High

¹Daniel Schreiber, Profile of the School Dropout, (Toronto Canada: First Vintage Books, 1968), p. 9-10.

School. This attendance program along with a solid curriculum and an extensive activities program were then combined to create a program to make the school environment more attractive and help keep young people in school and decrease the dropout rate.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to design and describe an attendance program for the purpose of reducing the dropout rate and absentee rate among students at Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The description of this program is for the benefit of the reader in order to help him in the realization and creation of an attendance program designed to decrease dropout rates and absenteeism in a high school of any size.

III. DESCRIPTION OF TERMS USED

Absenteeism. Absenteeism deals with the actual classes missed in the school day throughout the school year.

Attendance Records. Attendance records are the records upon which absenteeism is recorded by each teacher in order to obtain accurate results for current and future information.

Dropout. The dropout is the student who leaves school for any reason except death, before graduation, and without transferring to another school.

Bona fide. Bona fide refers to the type of excuse given by a parent in relation to the student being absent from school. If the student has reached the limit of days he may be absent, a document from a medical doctor or other professional person is the bona fide excuse needed for clearance.

Fifteen Day Removal. Fifteen day removal occurs when the absentee has accumulated in a class or classes fifteen absences without a bona fide reason. Unless a bona fide excuse is secured to lower the days absent, the student is removed from the class or classes where the fifteen days has been reached.

Referral Report. The referral report is a tool used to describe any problem a student may have. Attendance problems are sighted on this document with copies to inform the student, parent, and the teacher initiating the referral, the student's counselor, and the office of the assistant principal in charge of attendance and discipline.

Excused Absence. Excused absence is an absence cleared by the parent if a student has been ill or if a death has occurred in the immediate family. Other excuses are measurable and they may result in an excused absence. School work may be made up if an excused absence is issued.

Unexcused Absence. Unexcused absence is an absence cleared by the parent if the student has not been ill or a death has not occurred in the immediate family. An example would be the student who is kept home to baby sit or the student allowed to stay home with parental knowledge to work on his personal car. School work may or may not be made up with final judgment coming from the teacher when an unexcused absence is issued.

Truant. Truant is an absence not cleared by a parent. It is usually the result of a student that has not attended a class or classes during a school day. School work may not be made up if a truant absence is issued.

IV. MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS

Some assumptions have been conceived to provide a stable basis for this study.

It was assumed that the school curriculum and the activities program needed to be an integral part of a successful attendance program.

It is assumed that this program will create valid guidelines for the reader who wishes to organize such a program.

It was also assumed the data included would show the success of the program; and, therefore, give confidence to the reader with regard to his belief in such a program.

V. LIMITATIONS

It is necessary to have limitations in such a study for the consideration of the reader:

1. The study of the program was conducted only at Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa.
2. The program has never been under the guidance of anyone other than the authors of the program.
3. There is not a wide range of attendance programs to be surveyed for other ideas.
4. Unless the staff in the particular school conducting the program cooperates in the issuance of the procedures, the program will not be successful.

VI. THE PROCEDURE

In Chapter I the rationale for this study was offered. Chapter II includes a review of related literature with regard to the problems within the United States concerning dropout and absenteeism. Chapter III describes in detail the actual attendance program implemented at Thomas Jefferson High School, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Chapter IV displays the data valuable to the acceptance of the program described. Chapter V includes the summary, recommendations and conclusions of the attendance program.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

The literature and research reviewed in this chapter has been of extreme help in the formation of ideas and plans for the material included in this report. It points out the importance of the high school dropout and the fact that being in school is important. On the other hand some significant points are explained that indicate that some dropouts may need this type of situation during a specific time.

The school dropout for all the authentic concern the public has recently shown is not a new phenomenon, but the problem of the school dropout is. A little more than fifteen years ago, when more students dropped out of school than graduated, there was not noticeable public concern. A boy could leave school, find a job, and become an adult; today, he quickly finds out that he is not wanted by industry. Instead of a job, he has a promise of long periods of unemployment interspersed with short periods of working at dead-end unskilled jobs for low wages. President John F. Kennedy was sufficiently concerned about the problem to bring it to the attention of Congress and the American people in his 1963 State of the Union message, relating it to the economic well-being of our country: 'The loss of only one year's income due to unemployment is more than the total cost of twelve years of education through high school. Failure to improve the educational performance is thus not only poor social policy, it is poor economics.'

Less than two years later President Lyndon B. Johnson after extolling the development of America's free educational system through college, told Congress of 'the darker side to education.' One student in three drops out before finishing high school - a total of almost one million every year. And to some extent, President Johnson predicted the violent disturbances that have occurred and continue to occur in the slum areas of the northern cities when he said:

'In our fifteen largest cities, 60 percent of the tenth grade students from poverty neighborhoods drop out before finishing high school.' He did not mention that at least another 10 percent never reach the tenth grade.

Undoubtedly, the dropout problem has been brought into being by a multiplicity of factors, largely extrinsic to the school, and peculiar to our times. Some of them are:

- * the high and almost constant rate of unemployment. (Negro unemployment is twice that of white unemployment.)
- * large-scale migration from rural and farm areas to urban center.
- * the population explosion - a million more youths reached age eighteen in 1965 than did in 1964.
- * a continual rise in delinquency and crime among youths, although large sums of money are being spent to counteract this development.
- * an increase in the number of welfare families, especially in the large cities, further heightened by a marked increase in the total cost of public assistance.
- * the increased use of technology in farming.
- * the elimination of unskilled jobs through automation,
- * and the racial riots in northern cities, in which the participants are overwhelmingly the unemployed, out-of-school youths of the area.

Today, it is impossible not to see the problem of the school dropout as the keystone of a conglomeration of problems which threatens to overwhelm the stability of America's existence.²

As Schreiber has related the dropout problem is of great magnitude. Jerald Bachman on the contrary says the following:

Dropping out of high school is overrated as a problem in its own right. Actually it is the end result or symptom of

²Daniel Schreiber, Profile of the School Dropout, (Toronto Canada: First Vintage Books, 1968), p. 3-4.

other problems originating much earlier in life.

Dropouts experience difficulties, to be sure. Their aspirations, accomplishments, and self-esteem are below average. But these limitations are already present or predictable by the start of tenth grade, and there's little evidence that dropping out makes matters worse.

This conclusion is based on results from a nationwide study called Youth in Transition, conducted by the Institute for Social Research. Under a contract from the U.S. Office of Education, the Institute's Survey Research Center selected a representative sample of more than 2,000 tenth grade boys from 87 public schools across the country. Interviews were first conducted with the boys in 1966; follow up information was obtained in 1968, 1969, and 1970--a year after most of the students had graduated from high school.

This 'before and after' research--which looked at the same young men both before any had dropped out of school and then later after some had become dropouts--is uniquely suited to the job of distinguishing between causes and effects; it is also time-consuming and expensive and therefore quite rare.

The more typical source of data is the 'after only' research design which begins with those who have already dropped out and compares them with those who remained in school. In some instances, the 'stayins' are matched to the dropouts in terms of family socioeconomic level, test scores, and other characteristics. Nevertheless, we can be sure that some prior differences existed which led certain individuals to drop out while others remained in school. This leaves us forever in doubt about the validity of these 'after the fact' study findings because what might appear to be results of dropping out could actually be among the causes.

Our own findings, like those of the typical 'after only' study, found the dropouts were different in some respects from stayins--especially those stayins who entered college. For example, the average level of delinquency reported by dropouts was much higher than that for stayins. But which came first: the dropping out or the high level of delinquency? Because ours was a 'before and after' design, we were able to show that in nearly every case a difference which turned up at the end of the study was equally strong before dropping out.³

3

Jerald G. Bachman, "Dropouts Are Losers--Says Who," Today's Education, 61:4, April, 1972.

The Omaha World-Herald in July of 1972, shows the advantages and disadvantages of continuing with higher education.

Eight out of 10 jobs to be filled in the 1970's will be open to young workers with less than a college degree.

The statement is from a Labor Department press release on training requirements.

'Of course I intend to send my kids to college. I don't know how I'll pay, but no youngster will have a chance in the future without a college degree.'

That statement could be made by any of several million parents.

The discrepancy has many ramifications.

For the present: should families go deeply into debt to pay tuition for a youngster who really doesn't want to go to college?

For the future: will a degree make the recipient happier even if he doesn't get a better job?

And for society: is the present popular attitude that 'everyone is entitled to a college education' really short-sighted?

Professional and technical jobs, which almost always require college training, are expected to grow faster than any other occupational group, according to the Labor Department.

However, in announcing publication of the biennial Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Labor Department makes a distinction between percentage growth and growth in actual numbers.

'More than two-thirds of the job openings arising from occupational growth and replacement needs through the 1970's will be in clerical, sales, service, blue collar and farm jobs that usually do not require a college degree.'

The distinction that many Americans do not make is this: jobs in the future may require more schooling, but that does not necessarily mean more college education.

A special White House panel recommends in a confidential report to President Nixon that the administration provide

urgent assistance to millions of blue-collar workers. The newspaper said the report describes the workers as economically trapped, socially scorned and 'overripe for a political response to the pressing needs they feel so keenly.'

The Times, said it had obtained a copy of the report titled, 'The Problems of the Blue Collar Worker,' which was a year in preparation by the panel headed by former Labor Secretary George P. Shultz.

An 11-point program ranging from new tax advantages to the issuance of postage stamps honoring craftsmen is proposed, the newspaper said.

Both blacks and whites in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 annual income range are studied in the report.

Socially, the status of manual and skilled labor has fallen so that 'fathers even apologized for their occupations instead of holding them up as an aspiration for their sons,' the report said.⁴

With this information reviewed it is assumed that some students will not continue with school because the necessity is not at hand.

Even students with high ability drop out of school. In his article, "Characteristics of High Ability Dropouts," Joseph L. French describes the following facts:

Our country's freedom and security are threatened when its youth are not educated to their maximum potential. The tremendous waste involved when a youth prematurely drops out of school affects all citizens. His contribution of talent (and tax money) to our way of life is reduced. The greatest loss, however, is to the individual who is restricted in his personal development. The restriction of self-realization that accompanies a student's withdrawal from school before he is capable of entering an appropriately high vocational activity is one of the most devastating aspects.

⁴Omaha World-Herald, July 12, 1972, p. 14, cols. 1-3.

of the United States' dropout problem. Too often these dropouts are youth who are disadvantaged in other ways also.

Even though school holding power is better today than it ever has been, about 25 percent of the secondary school population in the U.S. withdraw without graduating. Of every 1,000 pupils enrolled in the fifth grade in 1924-25, 302 graduated from high school. The situation has changed dramatically in 30 years. Of every 1,000 pupils enrolled in the fifth grade in 1954-55, 642 graduated. The secondary schools more than doubled their holding power in that 30-year period. The holding power has steadily improved at the rate of two or three percent a year. Of course the holding power varies by state and within each state.

For example, only a few years ago, 27 percent of all students entering the ninth grade in Pennsylvania failed to graduate. In 1964-65 only 16 percent of all students entering the ninth grade four years earlier dropped out before graduating. Comparative data for dropout studies are difficult to obtain, but studies of Pennsylvania dropouts of all intellectual levels were conducted for the 1956-57 and the 1962-63 school years.⁵

The majority of male dropouts, in their own words, left school because: 1. they did not like school (20 percent), 2. they were asked to leave (18 percent), 3. they wanted to get a job (17percent), or 4. they wanted to get married (11 percent). Twenty percent of the unmarried female dropouts left school because they did not like it; others left because they wanted jobs (16 percent), because of failing grades (12 percent), or because they were needed at home (12 percent). A large majority (82 percent) of the married female dropouts left school in order to be married. Personality data which will be discussed later suggest that the married females were quite different than male, and unmarried female, dropouts.⁶

The facts for dropping out of school concerning the high ability dropout were facts comparable to all dropouts.

⁵Joseph L. French, "Characteristics of High Ability Dropouts," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 53:334 February, 1969.

⁶Ibid., p. 70-71.

The book, The Appropriate Placement School: A Sophisticated Nongraded Curriculum, describes the problem of dropouts as follows:

Through the advances in industrial technology unskilled jobs are being rapidly eliminated. The process is bringing to the fore a 'dropout' problem which is approaching a national scandal. Last year between thirty and forty percent of all teenage youngsters dropped straight out of school and into the vanishing market of unskilled jobs. We can no longer afford to tolerate this problem.

What is a school dropout? The best definition of a dropout is a person of school age who leaves school before he has prepared himself for work consistent with his intellectual capacity. In a recent study of 2,400 dropouts made by the Colorado State Department of Education it was found that more than 60 percent of the high school dropouts were average or above average in ability, but nearly 70 percent were below average in scholastic achievement. Another significant factor reported by the survey was that 40 percent of the dropouts had been retained in one or more grades in school.

Unfortunately the schools have no conception of how to cope with the dropout, for he cannot be absorbed into the existing system of education. Many schools are actually glad to see the dropout leave school. Others are, at best, ambivalent about his departure. This is the chance to get rid of a prickly pear. It is indeed unfortunate that the agencies which accredit schools do not ask to see the schools dropout reports.⁷

Havinghurst identifies the problem further as follows:

Although programs of persuasion and compulsion have kept the percentage of dropouts on the decline, the ineffectiveness of this additional instruction has been painfully apparent. As many as 25 or 30 percent of the young people in slum areas fail to grow up successfully in the milieu of present-day schools.⁸

⁷B. Frank Brown, The Appropriate Placement School: A Sophisticated Nongraded Curriculum, (New York: Parker Publishing Company, 1965). p. 137-138.

⁸Claude C. Lammers, "Automation, Dropouts, and Educational Dogma," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 51:323 December, 1967.

Urban youth from slum areas, with outlooks shaped by a legacy of poverty, despair, and discrimination, do not readily 'buy' the idea of school attendance as preparation for employment--it is instead, merely an alternative to idleness. According to James S. Coleman, this alternative imposes upon youth 'the indignity of going to a school he did not choose, to a teacher he does not like, to do things he considers childish.'⁹

A report by a committee from Keokuk Senior High School, Keokuk, Iowa, is included in the appendix to point out the fact that some type of policy is an integral part of high school attendance procedures.

⁹Ibid., p. 35

CHAPTER III

The program that is to be described here has met with great success since its inception in 1971. In the school year 1970-71 this attendance policy was adopted. The dropout rate before the program was 15.18 percent, and at the close of the 1972-73 school year the dropout rate had decreased to 8.56 percent. It is also important to mention that over forty packets have been sent to requesting high schools in four states of the Midwest and two school districts have adopted the entire program. The main goal to be achieved was the use of a tool to keep young people in school. The general philosophy was to extend the responsibility of attendance to both parents and students from the aspect that it is not only the school's responsibility to promote good attendance but also student and parent responsibility. The so-called role of "Detective" Assistant Principal in Charge of Attendance has in fact been changed to Assistant Principal in Charge of Student Affairs because responsibility has been distributed to everyone involved.

Before the details of the actual program are described it is important to explain the preliminary steps that lead to the beginning of the program.

A committee of students, both truant problems and non-truant problems, parents of both types of students, teachers, counselors, school administrators, and central office administrative personnel were appointed to discuss and recommend guidelines for the program. With this committee's recommendations the program was written and approved by the initial committee. The program in turn was submitted to the other local high school for approval. The Director of Secondary Education was next involved and his stamp of approval sent the program on to the Superintendent for the final administrative approval. With the Superintendent's approval the program was then submitted to the Board of Education. These procedures of approval were very important in the success of the program. Most people involved felt that School Board approval would give the necessary lift to initiate the program successfully. In many cases the fact that the Board of Education has approved the program was of great influence on students and parents who may have otherwise doubted the severity of being removed from a class or classes because of excessive absences.

The program functions around a fifteen day absence limit. This means that a student can legally be absent from class 14 days and remain in class, but on his 15th day he is removed from the class or classes. It is extremely important to emphasize at this point, that the fifteen day limit does not mean a student can miss 15 days without being questioned. The student and

parents are informed at intervals of three days for unaccountable or truant absences; six days unaccountable, or truant, or unexcused absences; nine days unaccountable, truant, or unexcused absences; and twelve days of any combination of unaccountable, truant, or unexcused absences. Removal at fifteen days is the final action taken.

Informing the parents involves great detail and the telephone, personal conference, and letter are important tools in this attendance program. The simple fact of the possibility of removal from class is in most cases enough to stop the greatest majority of students who miss school with a poor excuse. This check system has all but eliminated the student that awakens in the morning and just does not feel good enough to get up and attend school; and it has almost eliminated the student-baby sitter employed so that parents can work or attend other functions during school time. In fact, almost every type of excuse with the exception of a genuine illness or death in the family has been eliminated.

Another aspect of this program that has helped to eliminate severe absences is the fact that parents telephone the school to report absences between 7:30 and 9:30 A.M. It was assumed at the time of this plan that a parent may be more comfortable prefabricating an excuse in writing rather than disguising his voice over the telephone. A student or student's friend could also write a fictitious note easier than disguising his voice over the telephone. This method also eliminated

telephone calls by the attendance office to confirm absences or illness. Previously, the attendance office made 150 calls per day and under this program the number of calls has been reduced to approximately 40 per day. This, of course, releases the secretary from the tedious task of telephoning many parents each day and affords her more time to work with the human element of pupil accountability.

The proper administration of the program, of course, was the key to its success. Everyone involved was properly informed as to the proper procedures before the program would run smoothly.

The student handbook was perfect as a source of conveying the attendance policy to the student. It was explained in the handbook that regular attendance is one of the most important factors determining success or failure in high school and it was the individual students and his parents or guardians responsibility. Poor attendance results in lower grades, lack of interest in school, and ultimately, in dropping out of school, or failure.

The handbook goes on to explain that fifteen days absent from school per semester excused or unexcused would remove a student from all class rolls. Individual classes that were missed, fifteen days excused or unexcused would remove a student from that individual class roll.

If a student felt that his fifteen days or a part of those days absent were legitimate he could appear before a

council to explain his situation. The council would include: parents or guardians, student, student council member, the counselor, teachers, and an administrator. If the explanation to the council was medical in nature it needed to include a documented day by day account from a medical doctor. If the council decided that the student should be reinstated to school, he was given the number of days missed in which to make up back work.

If a student were absent a parent or guardian must call Thomas Jefferson High School that day with the reason for the absence. Parents were to call every day a student was absent unless other arrangements had been made. The call had to be made from 7:30 until 9:30 A.M. unless it was impossible, in which case a later call or a note would be accepted. This phone call was an adequate excuse for a students return to school. No note was needed if a call had been made.

Upon a students return to school, the student was to go to the attendance office and an absence slip was issued which showed the reason for absence, the dates absent, and a place for the signature of each teacher during the day. A student was to have these signed each period and was to give the slip to the last teacher who signed it to be returned to the attendance office. A duplicate absence slip was to be obtained in the attendance office if a student lost it. If the student's excused absence was called in before 9:15 A.M., the student

did not have to go to the attendance office for an admit - the teachers accepted the students back into class. If a student was ill and absent from school for five successive days, a medical doctor's verification was needed.

The next step for the proper administration was the routine for informing parents. It was decided that a letter sent to each parent and student was the best possible means of conveying the message. A sample of the letter is shown in the Appendix.

Although the proper informing of student and parent was extremely important, the actual administration of the successful attendance policy was in the hands of the teachers. It was extremely important that each teacher followed the specific procedures and clerical duties with extreme accuracy. An attendance booklet was created for this purpose and a sample was enclosed in the Appendix. This booklet attempts to create an accurate and organized form to follow. Along with this booklet are accurate and concise directions presented in the faculty handbook. It was explained to the teachers that an accurate check of attendance was important. It should be done by the teacher, not by a student. It should be done immediately at the beginning of the period, after the tardy bell.

Homeroom teachers were to send into the attendance office during the homeroom period, the cards of all students absent from the homeroom. The student council representative was used to deliver these cards to the attendance office. If the homeroom was all present, the "All Present" card was sent in.

Attendance cards were made out in duplicate in homerooms so that this procedure could be used starting the second week of school. Students who were tardy to homeroom needed to secure a tardy slip from the attendance office.

For all tardies after the first period, teachers recorded each tardy in the grade book; second tardy in nine weeks, same procedure; third tardy of nine weeks, same as above plus the teacher was to notify the attendance office with a referral card. Any day that a student was ill or had any other valid excuse for being absent from school, a parent or guardian would call Thomas Jefferson High School by telephone. A call was made by the parent every day to inform the attendance office. Attendance was also taken in homeroom for a double check of parent calls and to add anyone absent that had not phoned.

If a student missed 15 days of school (truant or excused) in a given semester, he was removed from the rolls unless he initiated the following action: (a) He could appear before an attendance council and provide sufficient evidence that his length of absence was legitimate, and that he would complete the required makeup work within a given period of time. (b) The parents or guardians must have accompanied the student to this meeting. The parents were notified ahead of time when the student was approaching the danger zone. (c) If the excuse was medical in nature, it was accompanied by a doctor's written excuse. (d) The final decision in each individual case

was decided by the council after reviewing the situation. The council could or could not decide to allow a student to conclude a semester. (e) Each student would begin the new semester with a "clean slate" and the counting of absences was to begin at that point. (f) Three skips in one quarter resulted in parent contact and six skips resulted in a suspension and a conference with the parent.

Attendance during the day was taken by individual teachers, but not reported by absence checks that were picked up every period as in the past. Each teacher was given specific forms for taking individual attendance. This form is included in the appendix. Teachers would report a student's attendance difficulties to the office at three, six, nine and twelve absences. If a student had missed a class, he was not admitted unless he received a clearance from the attendance office. Teachers were required to compile the attendance records at the end of each quarter by keeping a copy for his records, and sending a copy of the final report to the attendance office for a double check.

The above information may be adapted by any school regardless of size or social structure. The responsibility for a good attendance record rests on the shoulders of each student and his parents. The attendance office merely recorded the necessary data given to them systematically by parents, teachers, and students. A sense of maturity, responsibility, and honesty should develop within each student.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter was to present and analyze data obtained from reports and statistics from 1965 to 1973 that showed a decline in dropout rates, absenteeism, and telephone absence confirmations.

II. THE DATA

Following is a breakdown of the dropout rates at Thomas Jefferson High School from 1965 to 1973. Remembering that the current attendance procedure; hereafter called the 15-Day Attendance Policy, was started in 1971-72 school year and perfected in the 1972-73 school year. As one can observe the decrease of 3.13 percent from the school year 1970-71 to 1971-72, and the decrease of 3.41 percent from the school year 1971-72 to 1972-73 was the largest decrease from 1965.

Since the inception of the program in 1971-72 the dropout rate compared to 1970-1971 before the program began was 6.52 percent.

TABLE 1
 THE DROPOUT RATE FROM 1965-73
 AT THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Rate	Attendance Program
1965-1966	10.94	Traditional
1966-1967	9.50	Traditional
1967-1968	12.73	Traditional
1968-1969	10.59	Traditional
1969-1970	13.87	Traditional
1970-1971	15.18	Traditional
1971-1972	12.05	15-Day Policy
1972-1973	8.66	15-Day Policy

It is beneficial to show the students who have dropped school from the 1965-1966 school year.

The following table displays the steady decrease in dropouts during the 1971-1972 school year, when the 15-Day Policy was initiated. The following year also reflects the effectiveness of the 15-Day Policy.

TABLE 2

THE DROPOUT RATE FROM 1965-73
AT THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1965-1966	104	64	168	6.77	4.17	10.94
1966-1967	76	67	143	5.05	4.45	9.50
1967-1968	99	87	186	7.60	5.13	12.73
1968-1969	87	77	164	5.62	4.97	10.59
1969-1970	115	92	207	8.25	6.58	14.83
1970-1971	135	89	224	9.27	6.05	15.28
1971-1972	103	74	177	7.07	4.98	12.05
1972-1973	73	68	141	4.45	4.21	8.66

TABLE 3

ABSENCE DECREASE 1970-1971 TO 1972-1973

Year	Number of Students	Absences	Percentage Absent
1970-1971	1252	22,995	8.8%
1971-1972	1320	18,785	7.8%
1972-1973	1381	19,330	6.9%

This table points out the percentage of students absent in 1970-1971 before the 15-Day Policy was conceived. In the years 1971-1972 and 1972-1973 when the program was in effect one can observe the decrease in percentage to 1972-1973. In 1970-1971 there were fewer students but more absences. The 1971-1972 school year showed more students but fewer absences. In 1972-1973 the table shows more students than any of the previous years and fewer absences than in 1970-1971. Although there were fewer absences than in 1971-1972, the 1972-1973 school year had 61 more students which may account for the smaller percentage of absentees in 1972-1973.

Table 4 shows the decrease in telephone calls made to the homes of students to obtain reasons for a student's absence. As described earlier, the program asks that parents call the attendance office when a student is absent. The results are shown in the following table.

TABLE 4
TELEPHONE ABSENCE CONFIRMATIONS
FOR THE YEARS 1970-1973
AT THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Calls per day	Percentage of calls per day
1970-1971	111	100%
1971-1972	40	38.02%
1972-1973	26	23.42%

As mentioned earlier, the magnitude of the telephone call decrease provides more time for the secretary in charge of calling parents to work with the more humane elements of the attendance center.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter is to restate and review the basic procedures employed to demonstrate the attendance policy at Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

The Study

The literature reviewed was selected to demonstrate the national and local attendance problem. An attendance program then was employed at Thomas Jefferson High School to demonstrate an effective attendance method designed to decrease the dropout rate.

A description of the program was the basis for this study with the goal being a concise and accurate account to be used effectively by the reader in the creation of a similar program.

The Procedure

It is clear to observe that the attendance program at Thomas Jefferson High School during the school years 1970-71 to 1972-73 indeed showed a decrease in the dropout rate.

This success was truly attributed to the fact that this attendance policy indeed created a responsible situation to be fulfilled by students that might have had a poor attendance record. This program in conclusion then helped students remain on the rolls of Thomas Jefferson High School.

The fact that some students may "play" the fifteen day limit to its fullest extent is a problem if the teachers allow this to happen. It is the teachers responsibility to make certain that students understand and are encouraged to attend on a regular basis. As mentioned earlier, all people involved are informed at three, six, nine and twelve absences and all are given an opportunity to encourage attendance.

The adoption of this program by two other schools in the local area during 1972-73 and 1973-74 school years showed success and adds a confidence factor in favor of the program at Thomas Jefferson High School.

Observations

Why do students drop out of high school? In 64 percent of the dropouts over a three year period at Thomas Jefferson High School the main reason was attendance. Other factors that influenced the dropout rate included: discipline, fifteen percent; service-enlisted, seven percent; employment, seven percent; marriage, four percent; pregnant, two percent; and

deceased, one percent. The diligent dedication of student, parents, counselors, teachers and administrators did indeed create a program to curtail the attendance problem. When put into action this attendance policy decreased the dropout rate from 15.18 percent to 8.66 percent in a three year period. This documentation points out the fact that the mechanics of the program truly created a situation that checks attendance very accurately.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the results of the description and data discussed and displayed in these writings.

1. The dropout rate at Thomas Jefferson High School did in fact decrease as a result of the attendance program.
2. The school curriculum and activities program at Thomas Jefferson High School did in fact help make the attendance program successful because it created a reason to come to school.
3. The data displayed did in fact show the success of the program and it is hoped that it did give confidence to the reader with regard to his belief in the accuracy of the program.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evidence presented throughout the description of the program. An attempt was made to describe the program so that it would adopt to any school and operate with effective results.

Inclusion of all Involved

For the successful operation of the attendance program everyone connected with the school must be included and serve an active part. Students, parents, counselors, teachers and administrators should be instrumental in the writing of the program with approval by the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education. The proposal submitted to the Council Bluffs Community Schools can be observed in the appendix.

Day Limit

The day limit at Thomas Jefferson High School is fifteen. This number was reached by the writers because it was felt that a student that missed 15 days without a bona fide reason had little chance for passing a course. The main reason being the fact that the value of being in the class with the benefit of the teacher was indeed valuable and fifteen days was too long to be away from the teacher.

The number of days used by schools adopting the policy should be open to discussion and should not necessarily be set at fifteen.

Accurate Record Keeping

As shown in the appendix, there is an attendance booklet that was designed to keep an accurate attendance and an accurate accountability to all involved. If this method is followed accurate records can be kept. Teachers should be encouraged to keep accurate records and be convinced that only this method will make the program successful.

Faculty and Student Handbooks

The appendix demonstrates both faculty and student handbook sections concerning the attendance program. The important point to be considered at this point is the proper informing of all concerned. Effective handbooks can accomplish this purpose.

Parent Awareness

Probably the most effective tool that leads to good attendance is the attendance letter that can be observed in the appendix. This letter which is not a form letter brings excellent results. The greatest majority of parents truly appreciate the information included and the schools concern over the student's attendance problems.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. KEOKUK, IOWA, COMMITTEE ON ATTENDANCE

FOLLOWING IS THE REPORT OF THE KEOKUK, IOWA, COMMITTEE ON ATTENDANCE. THIS REPORT WAS COMPLETED IN JUNE 1973.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ATTENDANCE

During the present school year (1972-1973), there has been an increasing feeling on the part of the faculty and administration at Keokuk Senior High School that an attendance problem exists at our school. Since the feeling seemed to be growing and since the attendance figures for the first three nine weeks periods seemed to bear out this feeling, the administration formed a committee to look into the area of attendance. This committee was to be composed of the chairman, appointed by the Department Heads, and teachers, parents, and students appointed by the Chairman. The purpose of the Committee on Attendance, as it came to be known, was threefold:

1. To determine if an attendance problem did, in fact, exist.
2. To determine the extent of the problem if it existed.
3. To make recommendations for the correction of the problem to the administration and faculty of KHS and to the Board of Directors of the School District for the approval or rejection of all of these groups.

TABLE #1
PERCENT OF ATTENDANCE
9 WEEKS

<u>Year</u>	<u>1st.</u>	<u>2nd.</u>	<u>3rd.</u>	<u>4th.</u>	<u>Total</u>
65-66	95.2	92.9	93.3	93.4	93.8
66-67	95.0	92.4	93.4	93.5	93.6
67-68	94.2	91.9	93.6	92.7	93.3
68-69	96.2	94.3	93.2	95.7	94.9
69-70	95.8	93.9	91.8	94.1	93.9
70-71	94.4	92.2	92.4	91.9	92.7
71-72	95.0	91.7	91.8	91.7	92.6
72-73	92.4	89.9	90.3		*(90.9)

*Average for first three nine weeks periods.

Another point which should not be overlooked, is that the attendance rate increased 1.6% between 1967-68 and 1968-69, decreased 1.0% between 1968-69 and 1970 and they fell another 1.2% between 1969-70 and 1970-71. In trying to determine the reason for these drops in attendance the committee determined the following:

1. There was no attendance policy in force during the 1967-68 school year.
2. During the school year 1968-69 an attendance policy dropping a student from school after 18 days absence during any one semester was included.
3. This policy was included in the Student Handbook for the 1969-70 school year.

The Committee next turned its attention to the question of the attendance rate among those students who eventually drop out of school. The State of Iowa Drop-Out Survey lists 19 reasons for students dropping out of school. The table below reflects this survey among the dropouts of KSH School.

TABLE #4
DROPOUT SURVEYS

<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Reasons</u>
5	Behaviorial Difficulty
32	Dislike of School Experience
6	Needed at Home
10	Economic reasons
11	Employment
3	Marriage
9	Pregnancy
7	Other Known Reasons
7	Reasons Unknown
13	Moved - School Status Unknown

OTHER SCHOOLS

During the course of discussing the attendance at KHS, the Attendance Committee felt information on attendance from other high schools would prove beneficial. A questionnaire was developed and sent to 25 schools approximately the same size at KHS.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Talks with business leaders in Keokuk indicate many of the KHS students who work do not seem to have a very realistic view of the working world. This is shown by high absenteeism and a general attitude indicating that all absence from work will be excused.
2. Some type of written attendance policy needs to be adopted and strictly enforced by faculty and administration of KHS.
3. The majority of school who have written attendance policies include suspension, expulsion, or both as a deterrent to "excessive" absence. Since these schools seem to have much better attendance records than KHS, we feel the written policy should include provisions for suspension, expulsion, or both.
4. The statistical study done by the Committee indicates that there is a direct correlation between attendance and grade point average.
5. Schools having programs for drop outs or potential dropouts generally feel the programs are successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This committee does not feel that it has fully explored the many types of programs possible for dropouts or potential dropouts. Consequently, the committee recommends the Board of Directors study and explore these types of programs which are available in our area, with the idea of possibly adopting a program of this type for KHS in the future.
2. The Committee on Attendance would like to submit to the Board of Directors the following attendance policy for KHS:
 - A. Absence shall not be classified as excused, unexcused, or truant; any absence shall be counted as an absence.
 - B. After a student has missed a class six days, the teacher shall notify the student's parents of the absences in writing.
 - C. After 12 days absence from a class, the administration will notify the parents of the student

- C. Continued
by telephone or home visit that the student is not attending class regularly and will request parental help and pressure to get the student to class.
- D. After fifteen days absence from a class, the administration will ask the parents to come to school for a conference. At this time the parents will be notified that three more days of absence from the class will result in the student being dropped from the class.
- E. After eighteen days of absence from a class, the student will be dropped from the class missed and will receive a grade of "F" for that class and no credit for the class will be given. The student's parents shall be advised.
- F. At any point during a semester that a student, by virtue of being dropped from a class, is enrolled in classes yielding less than two units of total credit, the student shall be suspended from school for an indefinite period of time and expulsion proceedings shall be filed by the administration with the Board of Directors.
- G. Any student who is out of school under a doctor's care and who is doing his school work in a "home-bound" situation in cooperation with the school, shall not be counted as absent from classes for purposes of this policy.
- H. Any student missing classes while on a school sponsored trip or activity shall not be counted absent from classes for purposes of this policy. If the teacher whose class is missed has agreed in advance of the absence.
- I. Any time a student is tardy to school, it shall count as 1/3 days absence in each class in which the student is enrolled.
- J. If a student misses a study hall while in school, it shall count as 1/2 days absence in each class in which the student is enrolled.
- K. The administrative office shall keep track of the days tardy and the study halls missed, and shall inform all teachers of the days tardy and study halls missed once a week.

- L. The provisions of this policy apply to those classes meeting five times per week. In those classes meeting less than five times per week, the number of absences allowed before the provisions of B, D. and D above are instituted, shall be proportional to a class meeting five times per week.

APPENDIX B. ATTENDANCE PROGRAM SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL BLUFFS,
IOWA, COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT. INFORMATION
FOUND IN APPENDIX C, APPENDIX D, APPENDIX E,
AND APPENDIX F WERE ALSO INCLUDED IN THE ORIGINAL
PROPOSAL.

FOLLOWING IS THE ATTENDANCE PROGRAM SUBMITTED TO THE COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA, COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT. THIS PROGRAM WENT INTO EFFECT IN 1971-1972 WITH THEIR APPROVAL.

It should be noted that this procedure is designed to accomplish four goals:

1. To give the student more responsibility for himself concerning attendance.
2. To include the parent more in the attendance procedures.
3. To decrease the drop out rate because of poor attendance.
4. To create responsibility for attendance accountability not only in the school, but also the parents and the student.

APPENDIX C. ATTENDANCE BOOKLET - INSIDE COVER

ATTENDANCE INSTRUCTIONS

ATTENDANCE BOOKLET - INSIDE COVER

TEACHERS: This booklet is to be used to keep attendance for teachers and attendance office records. When a student accumulates three truants, a referral is to be sent to the attendance office. When a student accumulates six truants or unexcused absences, a referral is to be sent to the attendance office. When a student accumulates nine absences of any combination of a referral is to be sent to the attendance office. When a student accumulates twelve absences of any combination, a referral is to be sent to the attendance office. When a student reaches fifteen absences of any combination, a referral is to be sent to the attendance office for review. If the teacher follows these instructions he will help the student to attain the responsibility of attendance. At the end of each semester the original attendance sheet is to be turned into the attendance office. The second copy is to be kept in the teacher's booklet for his records.

APPENDIX D. FACULTY HANDBOOK ATTENDANCE SECTION

FOLLOWING IS THE INFORMATION THAT APPEARED IN THE FACULTY HANDBOOK. THIS WAS WRITTEN TO INFORM THE FACULTY OF HIS OR HER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE ATTENDANCE PROGRAM.

An accurate check of attendance is important. It should be done by the teacher, not by a student in any classroom. It should be done immediately at the beginning of the period after the tardy bell.

1. Homeroom teachers will send into the attendance office during the homeroom period, the cards of all students absent from the homeroom. Use the Student Council representative to deliver these cards to the attendance office. If the homeroom is all present, send in the "All Present" card.

Attendance cards (last name first) will be made out in duplicate in homerooms so that this procedure may be used the second week of school. Students who are tardy to homeroom must secure a tardy slip from the attendance office.

FOR ALL TARDIES AFTER THE FIRST PERIOD: Teachers will record each tardy in grade book. Second tardy of nine weeks, same procedure. Third tardy of nine weeks, same as above plus the teacher is to notify the attendance office with a referral card.

Any day that a student may be ill or have any other valid excuse for being absent from school a parent or guardian must call Thomas Jefferson by telephone. A call will be made by the parent every day to inform Thomas Jefferson of the matter. Attendance will also be taken in homeroom for a double check of parent calls and to add any one absent that has not phoned.

If a student misses fifteen days school days (truant or excused) in a given semester, he will be removed from the rolls unless he initiates the following action:

- A. He may appear before an attendance "council" (to be comprised of one administrator, one teacher of his choice, and his counselor) and to provide sufficient evidence that his length of absence was a legitimate and that he will complete required make-up work in a given period of time.

- B. The parents or guardians must accompany the student to this meeting. The parents will be notified ahead of time when the student is approaching the 'danger zone.'
- C. If the excuse is medical in nature, it must be accompanied by a doctor's written excuse.
- D. The final decision in each individual case will be decided by the council after reviewing the situation. The council may or may not decide to allow a student to conclude the semester.
- E. Each student will begin the new semester with a "clean slate" and the counting of absences will begin at that point.
- F. Three "skips" in one quarter will result in parent contact and six skips will result in a suspension, and a conference with the parent.

Attendance during the day will be taken by individual teachers but not reported by absence checks that are picked up every period as in the past. Each teacher will be given specific forms for taking individual attendance. Teachers will report a student's attendance difficulties to the office at three, six, nine, and twelve absences. If a student has missed a class he may not be admitted unless he receives a clearance from school personnel that may have caused the absence, or a clearance from the attendance office.

Teachers are required to compile the attendance records at the end of each quarter; keeping a copy for his records, and sending a copy of the final report to the attendance office for a double check.

APPENDIX E. STUDENT HANDBOOK ATTENDANCE SECTION

FOLLOWING IS THE INFORMATION THAT APPEARED IN THE STUDENT HANDBOOK. THIS WAS WRITTEN TO INFORM THE STUDENT IN DETAIL OF HIS ATTENDANCE OBLIGATIONS.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is one of the most important factors determining success or failure in high school and is the individual student and his parents or guardians responsibility. Poor attendance results in lower grades, lack of interest in school, and ultimately, in dropping out of school, or failure.

FIFTEEN DAYS ABSENT FROM SCHOOL PER SEMESTER EXCUSED OR UNEXCUSED WILL REMOVE YOU FROM ALL CLASS ROLLS. Individual classes that are missed, fifteen days excused or unexcused will remove you from that individual class roll.

If a student feels that his fifteen days or a part of those days absent were legitimate he may appear before a council to explain his situation. The council will include:

1. Parents or guardian
2. Student (of students choice)
3. A student council member
4. Counselor
5. Teacher (of student choice)
6. An administrator

If the explanation to the council is medical in nature it must include a documented day by day account from a Medical Doctor.

If the council decides that the student should be reinstated to school, he shall be given the number of days missed in which to make up back work.

ABSENCES AND TRUANCY

IF YOU ARE ABSENT A PARENT OR GUARDIAN MUST CALL THOMAS JEFFERSON (328-3061) THAT DAY WITH THE REASON FOR YOUR ABSENCE. They are to call every day you are absent unless other arrange-

ments have been made. The call must be made from 7:15 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. unless it is impossible, in which case a later call or a note will be accepted. This phone call will be an adequate excuse for your return to school. No note is needed if a call has been made.

Upon your return to school, go to the attendance office and an absence slip will be given to you which will show the reason for absence, the dates absent, and a place for the signature of each teacher during the day. You must get these signed each period and give the slip to the last teacher who signs it to be returned to the attendance office. A duplicate absence slip may be obtained in the attendance office if you lose it. IF YOU ARE ILL AND ABSENT FROM SCHOOL FOR FIVE SUCCESSIVE DAYS A MEDICAL DOCTOR'S VERIFICATION IS REQUIRED FOR READMITTANCE.

APPENDIX F. LETTERS TO PARENTS



Thomas Jefferson High School⁴⁶

2510 West Broadway

Phone (712) 328-3061

Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL



Date

Mrs. Parent
Address
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

Dear Mrs. Parent:

We are sending this letter for your information and concern. Jane has now missed 9 days in the 2nd class period.

If Jane is absent fifteen days, she will be removed from class unless she has a bona-fide reason for being absent.

If I can be of any help on this matter, please feel free to call me at Thomas Jefferson High School. 328-3061.

Sincerely,

Jim Howard, Assistant Principal

JH/ja

Enclosure



Thomas Jefferson High School⁴⁷

2510 West Broadway

Phone (712) 328-3061

Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL



Date

Mr. & Mrs. A. Parent
Address
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Parent:

We are sending this letter for your information and concern. Richard has now missed 15 days in 2nd period class.

Since Richard has missed fifteen days, he will be removed from this class.

If I can be of any help on this matter, please feel free to call me at Thomas Jefferson High School. 328-3061.

Sincerely,

Jim Howard, Assistant Principal

JH/ja

Enclosure

SAMPLE - REMOVAL LETTER

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