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An Analysis of Local District Initiatives to Reduce Student Absence Rates Subsequent to Passage of the No Child Left Behind Act

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AN ANALYSIS OF LOCAL DISTRICT INITIATIVES TO REDUCE STUDENT
ABSENCE RATES SUBSEQUENT TO PASSAGE
OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

by

LORI MYLES

(Under the Direction of Charles Reavis)

ABSTRACT

Absence rates in school districts have been a concern for educational stakeholders before the passage of NCLB act. The state of Georgia along with the United States has had to face the effects of this law in the area of attendance. Attendance as Georgia's second indicator requires school districts to become accountable for their absence rates within their districts by changing their attendance policies.

The overarching question for this research was, "Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and the subsequent changes in attendance policies?" The following sub-questions guided the over-arching research question.

1. What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?
2. What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia county that was observed in this study?
3. Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rate once school and district factors are taken into account?

The researcher's purpose was to provide an analysis of local district initiatives subsequent to the passage of the NCLB act, the focus was primarily middle school absence rates. There were 30 school districts and their middle schools involved within the study. There were

189 middle schools used within the four year study which spanned during the 2003-2007 academic school years. The retrieved data focused primarily on the absence rates of students two years prior and two years subsequent to the mandated attendance law.

Within the study, there was one dependent variable, and five independent variables. The researcher used regression analysis, descriptive statistics, t-tests and correlational models to answer the research questions.

Data analysis revealed the following findings:

- Pre-absence rates were higher than the post absence rates
- Attendance policies were comprised of various combinations of 21 components
- Some attendance policy components were considered more severe than others by respondents
- Severest policy districts tended to be more effective in decreasing absence rates
- Some school districts did not follow Georgia state's mandated attendance policy components

INDEX WORDS: Absence rates, Attendance, NCLB Act, middle schools, free/reduced lunch data, AYP, Georgia Department of Education, District Initiatives, School Districts, Attendance Policy, Compulsory Attendance Law, Title I, Non-Title I, Georgia Southern University, Superintendent, Dissertation

AN ANALYSIS OF LOCAL DISTRICT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE STUDENT
ABSENCE RATES SUBSEQUENT TO PASSAGE
OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

by

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Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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2010

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LORI MYLES

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DEDICATION

To God Be the Glory!

You Have Been My Jehovah Jireh, My Provider,

You Have Been My El Elohim, My El Shaddai,

You Have Been My Jehovah Nissi,

You Have Been My Jesus, The Son of the Living God...

You Have Been My Burden Removing, Yoke Destroying God!

You Have Been My Kerwin, My Kelora, My Chareva, My Charlene, My Roy, My Eva,
My Cherelda, My Joann, My Robert D., My Rodney, My Evelyn, My Carolyn, My Carla,
My Andre, My Tony, My Pat, My Lil Rodney, My Brady, My T.D. Jakes, My Juanita Bynum,
My Ravon, My Catherine, My Gail, My Jennifer, My Allison, My Shawndrel.

You Have Been My Friend! (John 15:15)

Who else but You brought me to this place! Our Deepest Fear is not that We Are Inadequate;
Our Deepest Fear is that We Are Powerful!

We ask ourselves, who am I to be, brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?

Actually, Who Are You Not To Be? You are a child of God. (Galatians 3:26-27)

You are Blessed (Psalms 1:1-7) You are the Generation of the Upright (Psalms 112:1-8)

You are an Ambassador of Christ (II Corinthians 5:20)

You are the son/daughter of God, You are an Heiress of God (Romans 8:17)

You are Co-Heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17) You are no longer a slave (Romans 8:17)

You are called according to His Purpose, You are Forgiven, (Acts 17:11)

You are Protected (Psalms 91:1-15) You are God's Workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)

You are Predestined (Romans 8:29), You are justified (Romans 8:29)

You are a Royal Priesthood (II Peter 2:9) You are more than Conquerors (Romans 8:17)

You are a Chosen Generation (II Peter 1:7)

You are the first fruits of His Creation, (James 1:18)

You are a Good Man, Even Your Steps are Ordered by the Lord (Psalms 37:23)

You are the Apple of His Eye (Psalms 17:8)

You are Ordained, You are God's Elect (Romans 8:33)

You are the Righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (1 Cor.1:33)

You are Called of the Lord, You are filled with God's Holy Spirit (Acts 1:6)

You are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Luke 10:21) (Rev: 13:6)

You are gods/goddesses (John 10:34)

The fruit of your body shall be blessed (Deut 28☺)

You are Kings and Priests (Queens and Priestesses) (Rev:1:6)

Even the trying of Your Faith is Much More than Gold

Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking,
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We are born to bring God the glory that is within us, for His pleasure (Rev: 4:11)

It's not just in some of us, it's in Everyone of Us! And as we let our own light shine,

We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fears, Our presence automatically liberates others."

For in Him, I Live, I Move and I Have My Being (Acts 17:20)

SUCCESSFULIZED by the Holy Ghost, and Lori Myles

(Similarly 1st authored) by Marianne Williamson



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Absence rates are high and according to research, these rates are continuing to climb higher. School absence is an ongoing concern for administrators, particularly in middle and high school. Frequent absences affect student learning, test scores, social development and school funding (Hodges, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education (2003) reported that there were 50,000 pupils a day missing school without permission which contributed to the overall estimated yearly absence rate of 7.5 million. Student absence in education has been a concern in the field of education in America for years (Danzer, Klor de Alva, Wilson, & Woloch, 1998).

Student absenteeism is a problem encountered by many school districts throughout the United States (Turner, 2008). This concern finds its roots in the history of accountability and can be traced back to America's first compulsory attendance law (Grocke, 2006, Henry & Yarbrough, 2004). Thattai (2001) stated that Horace Mann was the main activist and driving force in support of compulsory attendance laws for all children (Home Schooling Legal Defense Association, 2004, & Thattai, 2001).

When the American Industrial Revolution began in the 19th century, there were no standardized educational policies in existence and there were also no compulsory attendance requirements until the latter half of the century (Danzer, Klor de, Alva, Wilson, & Woloch, 1998). This period in history is an era that changed America, its mission and its goals as a country in many areas including the enactment of compulsory attendance laws (Henry & Yarbrough, 2004).

Student Absences and Child Labor

Eakins (2004) stated that as school attendance became required for children during the latter half of the 19th century, several examples of relief on behalf of the children became evident:

- the children did not work long hours in the fields or industrial sites
- no underage employment of children within the worksites
- parents were no longer able to neglect to educate their children
- exploitation of children by their employers was gradually diminished

Compulsory attendance laws helped to guarantee that students received educational services. The new law no longer gave parents the power to decide whether, when, and how to educate their children; instead, the decision to educate became a public responsibility (McCarthy, 2005).

Also supporting compulsory attendance was the movement opposing the social ill of child labor headed by Samuel Gompers during the Industrial Revolution (Eakins, 2004).

Gompers expressed his political position by stating:

When organized labor made its advent upon the field of industry it found the children in the mills and in the mines, in the shops and in the factories, and it is due to the much-abused organizations of labor that we find upon the statute books . . . the laws protecting the lives of the young and the innocent children, who through our efforts have been put into the school rooms and into the playgrounds rather than in the factories and the workshops. (University of Maryland; Vol. 6: Address; Jan. 8, 1903).

The children must be protected against the greed of their parents as well as the exploitation of their employers (University of Maryland; Vol. 8: Samuel Gompers to Indiana Legislature, Feb. 21, 1911).

Boehm (2000) stated that the combination of compulsory school attendance laws, educational reformers, and restrictive child labor laws effectively decreased the school

absence rates of children in the 1900s.

Absence Rates and Absenteeism in Education

Roby (2004) stated that high absence rates are a disadvantage to education, because with it there arises several other problems within the school systems such as truancy, low achievement, and loss of school funding. The state of Florida recognized that poor academic performance was associated with non-attendance; thus schools were required to take an active role in enforcing school attendance policies in an effort to improve academic performance (Turner, 2008, & Florida Department of Education, 2008). Chronic student absenteeism is also considered a major risk factor for dropping out of school and is also linked to other delinquent behaviors which may cause problems in a student's adult life (Turner, 2008, Walls, 2003).

Researchers stated that absenteeism reduces a school's overall success for academic achievement and accountability. As a result it causes concern for educators who are professionally committed and required by law to educate all young people. It also jeopardizes the school's legitimacy as an institution of learning (California State Office of the attorney General, 1982; LeVanto, 1975; Ohio State Department of Education, 1983 & Turner, 2008).

Absenteeism also has an effect on school funding because of the school's full-time equivalent student count (FTE). The FTE count uses student attendance to determine yearly state, local and national funding allotment per school and district. The FTE count for all students in Georgia is taken two times every school year, in October and in March.

An additional count for students enrolled in special education is taken in December. Two FTEs are reported on the fiscal page of the school report card. One is the actual student count which is taken in October. The other is a calculation averaging FTE counts to determine the student count for use in allocating state Quality Based Education (QBE) mid-term allotment funds to the system (GDOE, 2008. FDOE, 2008 and Wimmer, 2008). Absence rates in education do not just affect student achievement, but school district funding as well (Turner, 2008).

Absence Rates and the No Child Left Behind Act

The enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2001 would alter the focal point of education and identify attendance as a problem that hinders academic achievement in school systems across the United States. It was enacted by Congress in 2001 and in turn set nationwide standards for improving public education by the end of the year 2013-14. The law mandates that all students regardless of race, income, or language proficiency, are to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014. This mandate is measured by a standard which is defined as adequate yearly progress (AYP) and it determines a school's yearly success, or failure (GDOE, 2008 and U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Achieving AYP requires all states to ensure that all students are to graduate from high school, and all students with limited English proficiency are to become proficient. To achieve these goals, the law mandates achievement testing and requires states to set standards to judge whether school districts, schools, and subgroups of students within schools are making AYP. Schools that fail to make AYP must provide parents with the option to transfer their children to other schools (GDOE, 2008 and U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Accountability in Georgia public education is governed by the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE). The Department of Education publishes an annual report card that is the retrieved information from each school district. Each school district must show that as a system they have met AYP standards (GDOE, 2003). Accountability is one major emphasis of NCLB. The State of Georgia, each local school district, and each individual school is held accountable for the academic success of students.

To make AYP by meeting the attendance criterion, each school and district must meet the following criteria: at least 95% participation on the selected state assessments, have annual measurable objectives by meeting, or exceeding performance on the assessments, and show progression from one year to the succeeding year on its second indicator. The focus of this study was the second indicator which in Georgia is attendance rates.

Each school as a whole and all subgroups must meet the standards and show AYP. The Office of Student Accountability (OSA) rates schools based upon state/district report cards (GDOE, 2003). Additionally, more than half of the schools in the state receive federal Title I funds to provide supplemental instruction to students whose achievement is significantly behind that of their peers. One requirement for all recipients of these funds is that they are mandated to abide by federal NCLB guidelines, thereby showing accountability by meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) including attendance rates in their schools and systems (NCLB, 2001 & Novello, 2006).

School District Efforts to Decrease Absence Rates

Educational policy makers have focused on the high price of student absenteeism as a reason for policy implementation (A+ Educational Reform Act, 2000; Labaree, 1997; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; Spring,

1998). School districts know that absenteeism impacts school funding which was calculated using average daily attendance (ADA) rates (Spring, 1998). Secondly, absenteeism has been an indicator for dropping out of school, which costs society billions of dollars each year in lost tax revenues due to welfare, unemployment, and crime (Beachman, 1981; Bhaerman & Kopp, 1988; Galloway, 1985; Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson, 2000; Reid, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

Local school board members and school superintendents have also been concerned about student absenteeism. School districts have been aware of the cost of student absenteeism and have also understood the burden absenteeism places on school personnel as well as society (Spring, 1998 & Rosa, 2003). In addition, district leaders have been troubled that poor attendance of a few students has had a harmful effect on the majority of the students who attend school regularly due to teachers having to spend time catching them up (Allen-Meares et al., 1986; Galloway, 1985; Reid, 2000; School Administrators Association of New York State, 1996).

The remedy for some districts has been to develop strict attendance policies, which often have included a combination of academic sanctions, loss of course credit, and other penalties for excessive absenteeism. The effort by other school districts has been mild, even taking no action to adhere to the student attendance policy, which may have been set by the school district (Brokowski & Dempsey, 1979; Gemmill, 1995; Hassler, 1993; Petzko, 1990; Smith 1998; Rosa, 2003).

District by district attendance policy creation has resulted in a variety of written policies which have not been proven to be effective (Rosa, 2003 & Reid, 2000). The results have been policy and implementation variations which may have allowed room for client and stakeholder

manipulation of the system. The paradox of the situation is that while schools are graded based on student attendance rates (A+ Educational Reform Act, 2000), administrators and teachers perceive that they have little control over whether students attend or not (Duke & Meckel, 1980). Most school level policies have included procedures for implementation to include communicating student attendance policy, recording attendance, monitoring absenteeism, and enforcing policy directives (DeJung & Duckworth, 1986; Duke & Meckel, 1980; Reid, 2000).

Some schools have set up electronic systems for calling parents and monitoring attendance (McDonald, 1986), while other schools have been dependent on individual classroom teachers to monitor attendance (Ola, 1990). District attendance policies and school district administrators have possessed little in the way of rewards or incentives to offer teachers for their efforts in implementing student attendance policies. Attendance policies are primarily directed toward the students and typically have offered little or no incentives or rewards for students who abide by the policy's rules and regulations (Duke & Meckel, 1980).

Absence Rates and Georgia Prevention Efforts

To combat student absenteeism in Georgia, state legislators have initiated supplemental laws that require regular school attendance in order to obtain a permit or license to drive (Georgia Teen-Age and Adult Driver Responsibility Act of 1997). In addition, legislation has also included student attendance as an accountability measure to grade schools in Georgia (A+ Educational Reform Act, 2000).

To comply with federal requirements, Georgia used the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) "Leaver Rate." It defined a graduate as a student who leaves high school with a regular diploma in four years. This did not include Certificates of Attendance or Special Education Diplomas. The lack of unique statewide student identifiers has not allowed Georgia

to track individual students across all four years of high school until recently. Therefore the graduation rate is a “proxy calculation,” and reflects an estimate of the percentage of students who entered ninth grade and graduated four years later (GDOE Report Card Overview, 2008).

Decreased absence rates have been cited as one of Georgia’s reasons for lower dropout rates according to Governor Sonny Purdue (2008). Georgia’s 2008 annual AYP report card indicated that 94.3% of Georgia’s schools met the second indicator requirement in the area of attendance. Results indicated that only 5.7% of Georgia’s students did not meet AYP based upon the second indicator. Georgia’s high school graduation rate has steadily risen from 63.3 percent (2002-2003), to 72.3 percent (2007-2008). The Governor’s mission committed to identifying and assisting the at-risk student population at an early stage by offering tutoring and mentoring in order to decrease dropout rates (georgia.gov, 2008).

Additionally, the new plan focused on school absence rates and was implemented by: taking away student drivers’ licenses for 10 or more unexcused absences; taking away student drivers’ licenses for dropping out of school; creating an internet based virtual school so all high school students have access to a wide variety of courses; spending more money (allocated funds) per student than ever before; attracting the best teachers through a culture of respect (i.e. Master Teacher Certification and highest average salary).

The Research Base for Georgia’s Absence Rates and Attendance Policy Changes

Achieving low absence rates has been an increasing problem (Landing, 1996). Roby (2004) found that many states have conducted research on attendance policies, with the emphasis being on decreasing absence rates. The correlation has been between absence rates, dropout rates and achievement, not the overall effect, or relationship which may have been present within the school district’s attendance policy (Lan, & Lanthier,

2003; Schargel & Smink, 2004; Schwartz, 1995). Furthermore, the researcher has not been able to locate data comparing absence rates before and after the implementation of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act.

It was possible to find several research studies in the area of attendance and at-risk student populations (Arndt, 2006, Behli, 1997, Branham, 2004, Reese, 2005, Saporito, 2007, Scales, 2006, Winter, 2004, & Thompson-Hawkins, 2005). However the No Child Left Behind Act included all students not just the at-risk populations. With the latter in mind, there was a need for additional study and research in the area of how the No Child Left Behind Act affected attendance policy changes in the local school districts and the impact of those policy changes on absence rates.

There has been some research according to Grocke (2006) in the area of the NCLB Act, and meeting AYP for the purposes of accountability, but research was limited (Arndt, 2006, Branham, 2004, Hassler, 1993, Long, 2004, Reese, 2005, Saporito, 2007, Scales, 2006, Valverde, 2000 and Winter, 2004). Moreover much research has been conducted in the areas of standards and accountability, but the research which has been done concerned the effects of accountability when dealing with the Elementary Secondary Education Act, The Nation at Risk, Goals 2000 and the NCLB Act.

The aforementioned research has been substantial, but further research is still needed to learn about the absence rates prior to and subsequent to passage of the NCLB Act of 2001 (Buckshaw, 2006, Kohn, 2000, Lashway, 2001, Goodlad, 2003, and Hill, 2005). The proposed study will be valuable to the field of education by allowing the state of Georgia and the nation an opportunity to learn about the results of compulsory attendance policy changes. Also, educators will be able to compare the effects of NCLB

and the overall student absence rates. Superintendents and school boards need to be able to identify policies which may have already been developed within other school districts to reduce absence rates as a problem in their school systems (Georgia Department of Education, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of local school district policy responses to improve absence rates after the implementation of the NCLB Act. This study will make available to superintendents and school boards in the state of Georgia an investigation of efforts made by selected Georgia school districts to satisfy the standards set by the national legislative act to meet adequate yearly progress in the area of attendance.

The problem of the study was that there was a need to analyze all Georgia local school systems in order to examine school district initiatives which have been implemented to improve student attendance since the passage of the NCLB act. As a consequence of the NCLB act, compulsory attendance policies have been implemented as a solution to decrease absence rates and lower dropout rates. However, local district initiatives have not been examined to determine whether there has been an improvement in lowering student absence rates and therefore a void in educational research has been present.

Since Georgia requires state school districts meet the AYP second indicator, the new attendance policies which are being executed throughout the state need to be analyzed. The analysis should be able to statistically determine if any significant differences may exist among the policies. The study of attendance policies should also be able to determine the effect they have had on district absence rates within Georgia schools.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this research was, “Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and compulsory attendance policies?” The following sub-questions guided the over-arching research question.

- What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?
- What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia county that was observed in this study?
- Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rate once school and district factors are taken into account?

Significance of the Study

This study focused on information gained from the responses that local school districts provided in relation to their attendance policies before and after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. An analysis of this type enabled the researcher to determine how the attendance of selected Georgia school systems was impacted because of the enactment of this national educational law. The dissertation filled a void in educational administrative leadership and literature by investigating the effect of the NCLB Act on compulsory attendance policies in the state of Georgia, and subsequent impact on student attendance and local school districts.

Most of Georgia’s school districts have adopted new attendance policies since the NCLB act, but no study has examined details of these changes and their effect on absence rates. This study will report not only collective data, but provide data on the presumed link between absence rates and the implementation of NCLB Act.

The proposed research consisted of examining selected middle schools in the state of Georgia to learn what changes school districts have made concerning their county's attendance policy since the NCLB act and the impact of these changes on student attendance.

The information gathered could assist school districts with an overall picture, strategic techniques and/or informative comparisons of results from other school districts that have targeted attendance as a problem and have put in place strategies to overcome this problem. Furthermore, superintendents will be able to judge and evaluate the efforts of other counties and their attempt to satisfy the accountability standards set by the national and state legislation.

Research Design/Procedures

This study used a mixed methods design with the objective to present viable information to Georgia school systems about the changing absence rates and policies of other local school systems before and after the implementation of the NCLB Act. There were 425 middle schools in the state of Georgia at the time of the study, but the proposed research was narrowed down to include middle schools from thirty different school districts in Georgia. The total number of schools used within the study was 189. Middle schools were studied because research has shown that dropout rates begin to increase with this school age and are a good predictor of school completion (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006 & Greene, 2001).

The middle schools identified in the study were selected because of their changed district attendance policies, their overall absence rates and other demographic factors.

Additionally, the researcher identified the districts with the best improvements in absence rates and the districts with the least improvements in absence rates.

Part of the study was of a quantitative nature and the procedure used was a regression analysis. The five independent variables classified as covariates were:

- the district's attendance policy severity rating,
- the middle school's population size,
- the middle school's Title I /Non Title I status,
- the socio-economic status (SES) established by free/reduced lunch data,
- and the pre-NCLB policy absence rates during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

The absence rates of each district subsequent to the enactment of the NCLB Act was the dependent variable in this study. This variable was defined as the percentage of students with over fifteen absences. To insure that the data for the proposed research was available, a pilot was conducted. This involved accessing the Georgia Department of Education website as the main resource for information. The researcher retrieved all relevant statistical attendance data which was submitted for accountability purposes by each Georgia school district and determined that the data required for the study were available.

Once the data were collected, the researcher categorized the district attendance policies based upon the common characteristics within the policy. This allowed empirical testing of the various aspects of the policy of one district, as to its effectiveness as compared to aspects of the policy of another district. After collecting the data from the school district attendance policies, several variables were tested in order to answer the overarching question and sub-questions.

Some of the gathered data were:

- the school district's absence rates 2 years prior and 2 years subsequent to NCLB,
- the district's attendance policies which have been created since the adoption of the NCLB act,
- the school socio-economic status (SES), which was the number of free/reduced lunch services provided because of Title I middle school classification,
- the school size.

After collecting the aforementioned data, the researcher learned whether the absence rates were affected by the different attendance policy types which have been created by the school districts. The research and design portion of the dissertation enabled the researcher to determine if there was a difference in the schools attendance data after implementation of the district's new attendance policy.

GDOE (2004) mandated that the first official year for Georgia school systems to begin reporting attendance data was the academic school year 2005-2006 (GDOE, 2004). As a result of this directive, the academic school years 2003-2004, 2004-2005 were identified as the years in which pre-NCLB data would be retrieved. The academic school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 were used as the post- absence NCLB data, because every school district in Georgia was to be in full compliance with the NCLB law concerning tracking of these data.

After retrieving the absence rates from the thirty school districts, the researcher examined the school district attendance policies. The policies were ranked from least severe to most severe based upon a survey created by the researcher; the survey was given to ten individuals consisting of one administrator, teachers, students, and parents. Changes were made on the survey based on their feedback.

The information derived from the gathered data was presented and depicted in table and chart forms. The available research on attendance policies prior to and subsequent to the No Child Left Behind Act was used to answer the aforementioned research questions. The answers obtained from the data were used to gain information about Georgia local school systems and their implementation of attendance policies in order to achieve the adequate yearly progress requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations of the study were as follows:

- The findings of this study can be generalized only to the public middle schools in the state of Georgia and not to the overall populace of the United States of America.
- Data collected from the different school districts regarding their attendance policies could be considered as partial because the counties may have only released the information they considered as important to the study.
- Some middle schools within the chosen districts could not be used because the pre-NCLB absence rates were not reported during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year.

Delimitations of this study were as follows:

- Only attendance policies were included; other factors may have influenced absence rates.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Absence Rates: percent of students having 15 or more absences in one academic school year.

(Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2009). (www.gaosa.org).

Accountability: means that one must hold key individuals and groups responsible for student achievement through the systematic collection, analysis, use, and reporting of valid, reliable information.

Adequate yearly progress: (AYP) was a series of performance goals set by the No Child Left Behind Act stated expectations for each school district and school which received state Title I funds. AYP has teacher and paraprofessional requirements, accountability, sanctions for schools designated for improvement, standards and assessments, annual state report cards, professional development, and parent involvement goals.

At-risk populations: were defined as students who were potential dropouts that had a variety of conditions associated with being at risk; such as racial, ethnic, demographic, socioeconomic and institutional characteristics.

Attendance policies: were the guidelines and expectations for students who resided in school districts in the United States. The student attendance at school as defined, written, disseminated, and implemented by the school district's policies in order to insure that students attend school according to the compulsory attendance law.

Economically Disadvantaged Students: For purposes of AYP and other reports, Georgia defined EDS as students who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. For schools with federal waivers, all students are classified as economically disadvantaged; this data was collected as part of the Student Record.

House Bill 1190: was an attendance law which made it compulsory for all students under the age of 16 in the state of Georgia to attend schools in order to help meet AYP standards set by the NCLB act.

Local Educational Agency: (LEA) was the acronym used, but was also known as the school district' NCLB designee or the school system.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was a landmark in education reform. It required that each state defines adequate yearly progress for school districts in order to keep its federally funding and have all children performing on grade level within 12 years. Georgia included attendance as part of its compliance with NCLB. This compliance was entitled as the “second indicator.”

Rural School District: The U. S. Census Bureau defined a rural area as one that is not urban.

The state of Georgia defined rural as any populated area with at least 35,000 people or less. The Census Bureau further defined rural territory that was more than 5 miles, but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as rural territory.

Second Indicator: was another measurement needed in order to achieve AYP. Georgia required that all schools must make progress on its second indicator, which for school year 2002-2003 was attendance for grades 3-8 and graduation rates for grades 9-12. The group of ALL students must always meet the criteria for the second indicator. Any other group that meets the criteria for academic performance via the Safe Harbor mechanism must also meet the criteria for the second indicator.

(<http://techservices.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp/faq.pdf>)

Title I Program: was the cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It was the largest federal education program. Many of the major requirements in No Child Left Behind are outlined in the Title I law.

Title I School: was a school that has at least 35 percent of the children in the school (more than one third) from low-income families. This was determined by the

number of children who were eligible to receive free and reduced-price lunch at the school.

Urban District: was defined as an area of population which has at least 50,000 people.

The Census Bureau defines all other areas as rural. This definition was adopted by the General Assembly in 1999 as part of the Rural Hospital Authorities Assistance Act SB195).

Summary

In conclusion, absence rates have become an issue in most American school systems that have had to meet AYP standards; the state of Georgia is no exception. Research has revealed that absence rates have affected academic achievement, standardized testing results, and school funding, thereby causing schools to fail to meet other school accountability measures and indicators.

As a result of the state's lack of control over parental decisions to educate their children, compulsory attendance laws became the necessary antidote to combat this social ill. The implementation of the 2001 NCLB act was only one of the many laws enacted in order to address attendance issues since the Industrial Revolution. Georgia's decision to identify attendance as its second indicator in order to meet AYP elevated its importance.

Attendance policies and their implementation in local school districts have become Georgia's response to reducing absenteeism and improving student absence rates. Georgia's effort to prevent high rates of absenteeism and meet the required standards has allowed this study an opportunity to answer the research question, "What has been the effect of the NCLB Act on compulsory attendance polices and resulting rates of attendance?"

This study included thirty Georgia school districts and compared their attendance policies prior to and subsequent to the enactment of the NCLB Act. The researcher's objective of the study was to provide an analysis of local district initiatives to improve student attendance subsequent to passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. The study examined the differences within each district's attendance policy and its resulting impact on absence rates. The retrieved data provided research based knowledge that helped analyze the improvements of Georgia district attendance policies and their effect on absence rates since the enactment of NCLB.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter explored the practices of different states and school districts that have changed attendance policies in order to increase attendance. The NCLB Act has caused many states and school districts to review their student attendance policies and Georgia has been no exception. The resulting changed school district attendance policies emanate from most state compulsory attendance laws, but also have unique features.

Chapter two was composed of three important aspects of accountability which have been used to help states and school districts meet state, local, and national standards. The three aspects included:

- how a state, and/or school district sets goals to accomplish the requirements of NCLB,
- how a state and/or school district fulfills the responsibilities to educate the nation effectively based upon the law's standard,
- how states and school districts will face consequences for not meeting the goals set by the law.

This chapter also explored the development, implementation, and evaluation of attendance policies used by states and school systems in order to intervene early to prevent student failure. NCLB and its mandated requirements are presented throughout this chapter and were collaboratively tied to the discussion of changing attendance policies. These policies were the result of not meeting adequate yearly progress. A listing of studies related to meeting compulsory attendance standards which have become the foundation of meeting adequate Yearly Progress requirements set by the NCLB Act.

Requirements for Meeting Set Goals of the NCLB Act

As an overview, the federally mandated NCLB act of 2001 reflected the president's goal to strengthen education by bringing all students up to the proficient level on state tests by the 2013-2014 school years. It also seeks to hold states and schools more accountable for the results of their individual school systems if they are to receive federal funds. The law provides latitude in the form of freedom to states and communities to experiment with policies, access to proven educational methods, and even choices of schools for parents as well. The law in essence helped schools to improve by focusing on accountability for results without watering down standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001 & Hodges, 2005).

Hodges (2005) stated that the NCLB act focuses largely on school and district accountability and programs to support at-risk students. This legislation had three key accountability components:

- 1) All students must meet proficiency in reading or language arts and mathematics by 2014.
- 2) School and district accountability are measured using the prescribed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) formula. AYP is determined by calculating the percent of students meeting predetermined proficiency levels on a state test and performance on one other academic indicator.
- 3) Schools must meet all reading/language arts, mathematics and other indicator targets for every measured sub-population of children (37 categories in all) in order to be deemed acceptable. Those schools that miss even one performance target are subject to sanction.

No Child Left Behind, Title I, Part A, §1111(b)(3)(C)(iii) required states to develop single statewide accountability systems which will be based on state standards-based assessment programs that are valid and reliable for measuring student success or failure. In essence all states must develop and implement a uniform accountability system for all public school systems. NCLB also requires all districts and schools receiving Title I funds to meet state adequate yearly progress (AYP). At best, each state's accountability system must measure their public school based upon the prescribed law. In order to meet AYP:

- each school must have the percentage of students in whole-school combined group (aggregate) and subgroup aggregates meet, or exceed proficiency targets on state reading or language arts and mathematics assessments
- each school must have a minimum of 95% of students for the whole school and subgroup aggregates participate in annual testing
- each school must have performance on one other academic indicator that meets or exceeds state-determined targets

Definition of the subgroups aggregations are considered as a collection of groups which include racial/ethnic classification, students with disabilities, students for whom English is considered as a secondary language, and low-income students who are considered part of the at risk population. All aggregated populations must meet the same targets in order for a school to be deemed to have met AYP. AYP further increases accountability measurements by requiring that all of the groups meet the target of 100% proficiency by 2014.

Smith (2005) stated that historically, schools have had to adapt to different types of educational reform. First of all a report title *A Nation at Risk* (1983) delivered the alarming message that American schools were failing, particularly compared to schools in other advanced European countries and developing countries in Asia. Major events mark the changes that have taken place in our education system since then. It was the first to become a catalyst in generating an overall national focus on the quality of education in the country.

There were other pre-cursors such as; the launching of “Sputnik” event in the late 1950s, the civil rights movement in the mid 1960s, and certainly the desegregation movement that came out of the *Brown vs Board of Education* decision in 1954. Accountability was in its beginning stages, but the ESEA act of 1965 transformed itself in to the new face of national accountability, No Child Left Behind Act. ESEA emphasized equal access to education and established high standards and accountability as well as the AYP goals of the NCLB act (Smith, 2005).

If schools fail to meet AYP goals for two or more years, they are classified as schools in need of improvement and face consequences. Hodges (2005) further noted in her study that currently school and student performance in relation to meeting the set goals of NCLB indicated that there should be annual improvement targets for student achievement. It also includes an expectation that states and school districts meet achievement goals for those subgroups that have already been identified as at-risk (Hodges, 2005). Schools are measured against thirty-seven indicator cells which are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Adequate Yearly Progress Matrix

| | Performance on | Participation in | Performance on | Participation in | Other Academic |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Population | Reading/Language | Reading/Language | Mathematics | Mathematics | Indicator |
| | Arts Assessment | Arts Assessment | Assessment | Assessment | |
| All Students | | | | | |
| Asian American | | | | | |
| African -American | | | | | |
| Caucasian | | | | | |
| Hispanic | | | | | |
| Native American/ Pacific Islander | | | | | |
| Low-Income students | | | | | |
| Students with disabilities | | | | | |
| English language learners | | | | | |

The table indicated that in order to meet AYP, the school must meet the state-specified targets in every cell for every group and sub-group (i.e. performance on Reading/Language Arts Assessment, participation on Reading/Language Arts Assessment, performance on Mathematics Assessment, participation on Mathematics Assessment). In the case of Georgia, attendance targets for each of the four sub-groups is also considered as the “other academic indicator.” Success will then be established when the school districts compare grade-level cohort performance against the state established targets.

With the impact of No Child Left Behind, 2001, and the attendant accountability movement, a renewed interest and focus has been placed on ensuring that every student

has access to free and appropriate learning opportunities (Haertel, 1999; Lashway, 2001; McNeil, 2000; Smith, Heinecke, & Noble, 1999; Foy, 2005; Wellstone, 2000).

Accountability in education has been high on the agenda of governments and educational authorities for some years (Foster, 1999; Otto, 2000; Perry, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated that all states establish a single statewide accountability system that will be effective in ensuring that all districts and schools make adequate yearly progress. The accountability system must be based on academic standards and assessments, include achievement for all students, and include sanctions and rewards to hold all public schools accountable for student achievement. If a school failed to make adequate yearly progress, possible corrective actions included:

- Replace school staff relevant to the failure
- Institute and implement a new curriculum
- Significantly decrease management authority at the school
- Appoint outside experts to advise the school
- Extend the school year or school day
- Restructure internal organization of the school. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a series of performance goals set by the state for each school district and school in order to measure attendance and academic success. Under NCLB, for the 2003-2004 school year, schools that do not meet AYP for two consecutive years will be subject to various forms of assistance, intervention, and other actions with consequences increasing each year the school or LEA remains on the list (Georgia Department of Education-No Child Left Behind Website, 2003).

Early History of Compulsory Attendance Policies in Education

The first compulsory attendance policy was enacted into Massachusetts law in

1852. This law stated that every person who shall have any child under his control between the ages of eight and fourteen years shall send such child to some public school for twelve weeks during the year. Secondly, this law stated that there would be a twenty dollar fine for all truancy violators of the law. Lastly, section three of the regulation mandated that it is the duty of the school committee in the several towns or cities to inquire into all cases of violation of the first section of this act, and to ascertain and investigate all persons violating the compulsory attendance law. All reasons and violations were to be reported and any town or city must not only give an annual report, but they must also report those violations of the law (Massachusetts Home Learning Association, 2004 & University of Maryland History Department, 2003).

Grocke (2006) stated that the compulsory attendance law was revised in 1873. In the revised law, the age limit was reduced to twelve, but the annual attendance was increased to twenty weeks per year instead of the required minimum of twelve weeks. This revision also brought with it statutes of enforcement, because now each city and town would have to hire truant officers to check absences and prosecute offenders. Some of our current laws have grown from these early laws and have expanded on them. Novello (2006) surmised that it took more than sixty years to bring all the states and territories to an agreement on compulsory attendance because education for all in this period of our culture was not seen as a necessity.

Support for Compulsory Attendance Laws

The support of compulsory attendance grew from efforts to combat child-labor and illiteracy in the United States (McCarthy, 2005, Danzer, Klor de, Alva, Wilson, & Woloch, 1998, Thattai, 2001 & Christie, 2006). Illiteracy meant Americans could not read, write, or reason by the standards set by many educators (Novello, 2006). Goodlad (2003) stated that more than 50,000 white illiterates were found in each of the states. Newspapers across the

country also stated that over 500,000 white Americans admitted that they were unable to read and write (Goodlad, 2003).

Even though all states had some type of compulsory attendance mandate by 1929, when World War II began, of the 18,000,000 men who were called up to serve, 5,000,000 were rejected for physical, mental, and educational reasons, one-seventh, or 700,000 for “mental deficiency,” which was largely because of their educational deficiency (Goodlad, 2003). With the latter profound impact of illiteracy, the national 1940 census question on illiteracy was changed in 1940 to ask the respondent how many years of schooling he had completed. The mean average of years of school attendance was five years. The response which was given was assumed by the proponents of compulsory attendance and politicians that those five years of schooling would produce at least a literate person (Novello, 2006 & McCarthy, 2005).

Those who supported compulsory attendance argued that the parent knew the child had rights which not even a parent could violate. Parents were not allowed to rob their child of the right of a good education. An additional benefit of compulsory attendance law was that it provided accountability. It made states, school systems, and parents responsible for a child’s education (Long, 2004). Other reasons for support of compulsory school attendance were that children had less idle time; also support was gained as all children were included despite their financial status or mental ability.

Furthermore, support was gained since funding of the school added additional revenue to towns, cities and districts through the mandated attendance of their children. And the final reason many supporters of compulsory attendance advocated this policy was that it enabled them to compare their educational systems and students against those in other countries (Richardson and Parker, 1993, & Novello, 2006).

Compulsory Attendance and Opposition

In 1872, B.G. Northrop, Secretary of the Connecticut State Board of Education, used his annual report to spell out the points of opposition to compulsory attendance legislation and his refutation of them (Novello, 2006). The report stated that compulsory attendance was a law that created a new crime, because it interfered with the liberty of parents. Additionally, it gave government a newfound power; compulsory attendance laws created, in effect, an education prison system. According to Northrop, prisons get their prisoners because the police drag them in, whereas public schools get their students because compulsory-attendance laws let school authorities drag children into their schools, with or without parent's consent (Novello, 2006, and Grocke, 2006).

The impact of compulsory education laws and their enforcement was most profound on religious schools and home schoolers, because the trend in these groups was not to educate their children, but to use them for work purposes and provide for the family. Most recently, Novello (2006) stated his opposition that most enforcement efforts pursuant to compulsory education laws are directed at parents and schools that are making a good-faith attempt to educate their children (p. 26).

Grocke (2006) as an opponent, stated that attendance would be just as high, if the law of compulsory attendance were to be abolished tomorrow, because the individual and general interest in public education would still remain as high and consider education just as important (Grocke, 2006). Gray (2006) based his opposition to compulsory attendance on the fact that it applied to all ethnic groups; yet, it was largely the minority students who suffered from low grades and attendance. Thus Gray argued that compulsory attendance should only apply to minority students and their parents.

Compulsory Attendance in Georgia

Georgia's first compulsory attendance law was passed in 1916 with a mandatory age of seven (Home School Court Report, 2000, Novell, 2006 & Georgia Department of Education, 2004). While Georgia has always provided some education for the state's white children, even seeing to the establishment of the state's first government supported high school, the Academy of Richmond County in Augusta in 1783. Despite the new school, attendance remained optional until the 1916 legislation. This law prevailed until the enactment of the 1985 law (Barger, 2004, Thattai, 2001, Novello, 2006, & National Commission for Excellence, 1983).

Georgia implemented the Quality Basic Education Act in 1985 as a result of the newly instituted and revised QBE law. As the state's official curriculum for public schools, the law allocated state funds to local school systems in order to increase funding for schools which needed additional resources for their at-risk populations. The state provided instruction for problem learners, at-risk populations, and implemented research-based practices and other progressive methodologies to advance student achievement and increase student attendance (Angrist, 2001, Lewis, 2004 & GDOE, 2002).

Georgia's new law stated that any child between the ages of 6 and 16 was required to attend school, or to at least finish the 10th grade. On May 4th 1987, Georgia adopted a new law stating that every parent, guardian, or other person residing in the State of Georgia was required to enroll and send children in their care and charge between the ages of 6 and 16 to a public, private school, or home school unless the child was specifically exempt (Novello, 2006 & Pearson, 2007).

Barger (2004) and Novello (2006) confirmed in their studies that according to the law children were expected to be in attendance for 180 days, unless lawfully excused, for the full session or sessions of the school in which the child was eligible to attend. Children enrolled for 20 school days or more in the public schools of Georgia prior to their sixth birthday became

subject to the provisions of the compulsory attendance law (Barger, 2004, Georgia Department of Education, 2003 & Novello, 2006).

In 2000, the legislature enacted House Bill 1187, known as the A+ Education Reform Act which mandated a comprehensive educational reform for the state of Georgia. Major components of this legislation included establishing maximum class sizes by grade level, lowering the age of compulsory school attendance from seven to six, thereby making it identical to Georgia's age minimum which had already been established in 1987 as the mandatory age of school attendance in Georgia.

House Bill 1187 was also responsible for eliminating fair dismissal (tenure) for teachers, and establishing the Office of Education Accountability. Long (2006) stated that the Office of Education accountability would help Georgia focus on its need for compulsory attendance. Accountability was necessary because from 1987 to 2000, no educational state, or national entity put demands on attendance as an identified problem in succeeding academically in school systems.

In the state of Georgia, the No Child Left Behind Act caused educators to recognize the relationship between daily school attendance, student performance, graduation rates, and classroom teaching. The end result was that there was a relationship which was readily noticed, the amount of time spent in class was a good measure of student success. Cox (2002) stated that the variable of attendance was a viable measure of potential classroom success (Lunsford, 2000, United States Department of Education, 2002, Georgia Department of Education, 2002).

A Georgia policy adopted by the state board of education requires school systems to notify the parent or guardian of any student who has five unexcused absences (Georgia Department of Education, 2002). Before the final policy was adopted, Superintendent

Cox did just as the NCLB law required by seeking input from parents, teachers, counselors, local school superintendents, juvenile court judges, and other educational partners from across the state. The approved attendance policy was in accordance with the 1190c attendance law (Georgia Department of Education, 2004, and Georgia General Assembly, 2004).

GDOE (2004) further strengthened its law by stating that any parent who is a guardian, or any other person in the state who has control or charge over a student within the age limitation barriers must not violate this code section. If one did, then he or she would be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction of this crime, be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 dollars, and not greater than \$100.00. Added to the charges, one could possibly even face imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, or a lesser charge of community service. Even more punitive for violation of this law, the courts could still have an open discretion for further penalties (OCGA§ 20-2-690.1, 2004).

In 2005, the state of Georgia mandated that all school systems within the state implement school attendance protocols, which would serve to monitor, identify, and refer students who are having problems attending school. As part of this protocol, the compulsory school attendance law for the state of Georgia has terms and definitions to indicate when the law is being violated. These guidelines help school systems identify and address problems with school attendance in an appropriate manner. The following terms have been set as guidelines for Georgia's school districts in order to identify those who violate the state attendance policy.

- Truant or truancy: All children identified as having excessive unexcused absences are defined as truants because school attendance is mandated by law. In this context, children who miss school and who do not have a valid explanation are deemed

unlawfully absent. Thus, school personnel use the single term of to designate all unexcused absences that require action by the school system.

- Tardy to School: Child has not arrived to school on time (defined specifically for elementary, middle, and high schools)
- Tardy to Class: Child has not arrived on time to class.
- Excused Tardy: Includes events that are physically out of the control of student/parent (e.g. accident, road closed due to accident, power outage, etc.)
- Unexcused Tardy Includes: over-sleeping, traffic too heavy, errand for parents, delayed attain crossing, etc.
- Absence: Child has not physically attended school.
- Excused Absence: Child has not physically attended school due to specific circumstances that the school board has deemed excusable (e.g. illness, observing religious holidays, when attendance would be hazardous to student's health or safety).
- Unexcused Absence: Child has not physically attended school and there is no justifiable excuse for the absence.
- Truant: Any child subject to compulsory attendance, who during the school calendar year has more than 5 days of unexcused absences. Excessive Absences
- Absenteeism: Any child who is absent for more than 12 days in any one semester is considered as having excessive absences.
- Prolonged absence from school: Prolonged Absence Due to illness. Child who has been absent due to illness for more than 10 consecutive days; arrangement can be made for alternative education program in these circumstances.

- Student Attendance Protocol: Procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of the compulsory school attendance law set forth by the state of Georgia. Procedures will include appropriately addressing the attendance issue with parent and guardians.
- Student Attendance Protocol Committee: A committee established by the chief judge of the superior court for each county composed of officials and agencies responsible for addressing compulsory attendance issues and reducing number of unexcused absences. (Georgia Department of Education, 2005; Rush, 2006).

School Absences and Wayne County's Attendance Policy

In order to identify state expectations, and “best policy” procedures in the development of a district’s attendance policy, Georgia chose Wayne County. With the threat of parental penalties, charges of misdemeanor crimes, and possibly monetary fines hanging in the balance, many counties in the state of Georgia have brought their school boards, superintendents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders together to address the problem of attendance (GDOE, 2004, Grocke, 2006, & Novello, 2006). Smith (2006) reports that Wayne County, Georgia, has become exemplary as a school district by annually listing its goals, limits, and incentives for following the compulsory attendance law set by the state.

The attendance goals set for the students are not to miss more than six (6) days out of each semester during an entire school year, and not to exceed more than ten (10) days during the complete cycle of the school year. This total when exceeded by the student could cause a student’s driver privileges to be revoked after the student has reached the ten day maximum amount of days allowed during the entire school year cycle.

With the concerted efforts of the school system, administrators, teachers, parents and community, Wayne county's administrators have reason to believe that their new attendance policy has decreased student absenteeism and increased test scores and will continue to do so (Georgia Department of Education, 2004; Novello, 2006; Long, 2004). A crucial part of Wayne County's attendance policy also punished those who did not reach and/or abide by the set attendance goal policy, but it also offers incentives for attendance as well (Smith, 2006).

The rewards and incentives component established a program to motivate students to improve their attendance. The program included, but was not limited to six points of rewards based on a bell-to-bell school approved routine during the entire year. The points accumulated by the students may be used to acquire such privileges as free meals, privileges of driving and parking on campus, participation in extracurricular activities, recognition among peers via winning top student honors and various other acknowledgement programs as the school deemed as motivational to reach the attendance goals and objectives (Smith, 2006).

Empirical Studies on Compulsory Attendance Laws and Absence Rates

Eisenburg (1988) pointed out in his study that there was a need to show the relationship between enrollment, attendance, and newly enacted laws in the United States during the years 1870-1915. The study compared school attendance and enrollment rates in the United States in order to show a possible relationship to the new law. The results indicated the newly enacted laws did not succeed in increasing public school attendance. State age-specific absence rates for 1910 were used to assess the laws' impact. Results also indicated that if states without laws had had laws in 1910, attendance would have

been only one to two percentage points higher.

Eisenburg's study (1988) used a cross section analysis in order to treat all compulsory attendance laws as identical and through this method it was discovered that age coverage, the minimum period of attendance, and enforcement provisions varied across states. To account for the variation, Iowa and Pennsylvania's compulsory attendance laws were assessed using cross-section time series county-level attendance data. Conclusively, the laws accounted for slightly less than a two percentage point increase in the attendance rate five years after passage in both Iowa and Pennsylvania. The failure of compulsory attendance laws to increase school attendance may be interpreted to mean the laws are unimportant in explaining the increase in human capital which made a significant contribution to economic growth between 1870 and 1915.

Simpson (2003) quotes research by Stigler in 1950 where he presents a study of both teachers and enrollment rates in America. In the study, Stigler (1950) examined the link between legislation and enrollment rates. He notes that by 1940, thirty-six states had a maximum age for compulsory education that exceeded the minimum age for work. However, his empirical work did not find that compulsory education laws led to increases in school attendance. Stigler concludes that compulsory laws were more likely to pass in states that experience large increases in school enrollment. He found no significant correlation between these attendance laws and school enrollment during this era in educational history (Stigler, 1950).

Belha (2003) tried to determine to what extent the state of Iowa's legislative compulsory attendance reform of 1991 facilitated local school initiatives to develop attendance policies to improve attendance. The 1991 legislative attendance law removed

the existing law of 120 days of required attendance and gave the authority to determine attendance requirements to the local school boards.

However, private and home schooled children were required to attend 148 days per year with no more than 8 absences per quarter. The data which was collected from official enrollment reports from the fiscal years of 1987 to 1995. They included the average daily attendance and average daily membership statistics. By creating a ratio of average daily attendance over average daily membership, a percent of attendance was determined for each district.

Belha's survey was sent to 389 K-12 public school districts to determine which school districts had, or did not have attendance policies in place in 1991. The study further tried to identify which districts changed their attendance policies after the legislative attendance law change of 1991. Each responding district was also asked to submit a copy of their attendance policy.

The policy information was used to determine the content of their newly adopted attendance policies. Of the 185 responding districts, 58.5% chose to write a new policy. Of the districts that wrote a new policy, the required number of days of attendance per year ranged from 148 to 180 days. To compare the percent of attendance from fiscal year 1987 to 1991 and from 1992 to 1995, an analysis of variance, ANCOVA and paired sample T-tests were conducted. The results indicated that there was no significant increase in student attendance after the change in the 1991 legislative attendance law (Belha, 2003).

Davis (2003) stated that serious consequences which have resulted from high dropout rates, graduation rates and low achievement test scores have made increasingly

high rates of unexcused school absence a major topic of debate in educational forums over the last decade. Very little empirically oriented research has been conducted describing the rates of absence for special needs populations, or at risk populations.

According to the researcher, this was a surprising response from educational and government entities given the results of a 1997 U.S. Department of education study that suggested that truancy within the special education population was a potent risk factor for academic failure. Additionally, no studies have been published to date which have examined the rates of absenteeism as they occur by diagnostic category within these particular at-risk populations.

Galloway (1985) conducted a series of studies in 1976 and 1982 known as the Sheffield Studies to gain knowledge about persistent absenteeism. In these studies, Galloway defined persistent absenteeism as missing more than 50% of the possible number of school days in the first seven weeks of school. At the elementary school level, .4% of students (5 to 11 years old) showed a pattern of persistent absenteeism while the rate of persistent absenteeism for older children (12-16 years old) was 4.4% a substantial increase in the middle school years.

Magnitude of the Attendance Problem

At the high school level, patterns of absenteeism are categorized by days of the week, grade level, classes, gender, and race (Gibson, 1993; Levanto 1975; McMeans, 1990; Robins & Ratcliff, 1978). The days with the highest rates of absenteeism were Mondays, Fridays, and days prior to vacations (Levanto, 1975). Higher rates of absenteeism were in the upper grades and reported cases of truancy by gender were more frequent for girls in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades and boys in 12th grade (Levanto, 1975).

Truants were more frequently older than their peers, African-American, living in a single-parent household, and rarely involved in extracurricular activities or religious activities (Levanto, 1975).

Other studies indicated that students enrolled in the fine arts had higher rates of attendance than students in vocational education (McMeans, 1990). The dropout problem was estimated to cost society billions of dollars each year in lost tax revenues, welfare, unemployment, and crime prevention (Bhaerman & Kopp, 1988; Dryfoos, 1990; Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993; Levin, 1972). Absenteeism was an indicator for dropping out of school (Beachman, 1981; Bhaerman & Kopp, 1988; Galloway, 1985; Jimerson et al., 2000; Reid, 2000)

In 2000, the dropout rate for students 16 to 24 years old was 10.9 % or 3.8 million young adults (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Robins and Ratcliff (1978) studied the impact truancy had on individuals by comparing students who attended regularly with students with patterns of absenteeism since starting elementary school. They concluded that 75% of career truants did not graduate, and as adults earned lower wages, exhibited more deviant behavior, and experienced more psychological problems.

Causes of Absences

Research on student absenteeism in the middle school is limited (Rosa, 2003). There was no single cause of persistent absenteeism (Galloway, 1985; Reid, 1986, 1999, 2000; Tyerman, 1968). There were patterns of nonattendance starting at the elementary level which according to the studies did lead to problems with student attendance in middle school (Galloway, 1985; Reid, 2000; Robins & Ratcliff, 1978).

Several factors have been identified as causes of student absences. Those factors were social factors, demographics, the socially disadvantaged, and truancy (Rosa, 2003; Tyerman, 1968, Woog, 1992).

Tyerman (1968) showed that some chronic absenteeism was linked to adverse home conditions, low social class, deprivation of children, abuse, neglect, lack of parental supervision, substance abuse, and family conflicts/violence (Dreilinger, 1992; Howard, 1983; Reid, 2000). Chronic absenteeism was usually linked to a student's home conditions, their low status in the social class, drug abuse with and within their families and deprivation by parents. Additionally parents of these children usually did not value education and had friends and/or family members who shared the same belief (Reid, 1999; Rosa, 2003).

Types of Effective Policies

Rosa (2003) indicated that there are three types of attendance policies which have always existed at the district level. The first type of attendance policy which has existed has used rewards to provide incentives for school attendance. Secondly, there are policies that penalized students for their absences through disciplinary actions. Lastly there has been in existence attendance policies that have utilized academic sanctions such as grade reductions or loss of credit for student absenteeism. The policies which have utilized academic sanctions prompt students, parents and stakeholders to question fairness, individual rights, and legality (Duke & Canady, 1991; Eastwold, 1989; Reid, 2000). Legal attendance programs according to Eastwold (1989) were effective if the student attendance policy included rewards for regular attendance, held students accountable for their actions, and treated all students consistently.

Rosa (2003) also sought to collect and examine the data related to the teacher's perception of the implementation of district attendance policy. The study revealed that in

order to successfully implement a new attendance policy, one needs to consider a five factor solution. Those factors were identified as communication with parents, truancy prevention, record keeping, enforcing the new attendance policy and school and parental support of students who successfully heeded to the policy. Some schools have even set up computerized systems for calling parents and monitoring attendance (McDonald, 1986), while other schools have been dependent on individual classroom teachers to monitor attendance (Ola, 1990).

In Reid's study (2000) administrators and teachers felt that they had little control over whether students attended school (Duke & Meckel, 1980). Reid (2000) found that most school level attendance policies have included procedures for implementation to include communicating the rules and regulations of the student attendance policy, recording student attendance, monitoring student absenteeism, and enforcing the attendance policy directives (deJung & Duckworth, 1986; Duke & Meckel, 1980; Reid, 2000).

Reid further noted that when developing an effective attendance policy, consideration must be given for handling absences, monitoring attendance, planning rewards and punishments, communicating with parents, meeting the needs of individual students with extenuating circumstances, as well as assisting students who have been absent from school for a long period of time. Results within the study indicated that administrators possessed little in the way of rewards or incentives to offer teachers for their efforts in implementing student attendance policies. The overall result determined that most teachers viewed their contributions to the implementation process as unimportant and nonproductive (Duke & Meckel, 1980).

Brokowski and Dempsey (1979) and Hassler (1993), studied the impact of student attendance policies with academic sanctions. Using attendance, achievement, and behavior to study the implementation of a policy with such sanctions, Brokowski and Dempsey (1979) found that the majority of students were not impacted by the use of an academic sanction policy. The study did however reveal that the less mature students and students with low IQs did benefit from such an attendance policy. They also concluded that a strict policy that included the aforementioned sanctions was and could be the best remedy for some districts based upon their demographics and characteristics.

In another study Gemmell (1995) explored the benefits and disadvantages of using retention as a deterrent of multiple absences. Excessive absenteeism was compared in four different high schools with retention used as a disciplinary action for all who missed more than the total allowed days within a school year. In all four schools, students who were retained for academic reasons were more likely to graduate, whereas students retained for attendance were least likely to graduate. The results of Gemmell's study suggested that an attendance-based retention policy only increased probability of the student dropout rate, instead of increasing the student's possibility of completing high school (Gemmell, 1995 & Rosa, 2003).

Fort (2004) designed her study to determine if a significant difference in high school attendance occurred after the implementation of a new attendance policy. Absence rates were compared based on grade level, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status as determined by free/reduced lunch eligibility. A pre-post analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the modified policy for grade level, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.

The findings of the study indicated no significance based on implementation of the modified attendance policy except for students on free/reduced lunch. Significant differences for this population existed based on ethnicity and socioeconomic status for both years. The results of the study indicated that the absence rates of the at risk student population improved (Fort, 2004). Additionally, the absence rates of Caucasian and Hispanic students also improved during the first year of this modified attendance policy study as well (Fort, 2004).

Griffits' (2001) study sought to find out whether the effects of mandatory student attendance and academic student time on task would be able determine whether an attendance policy which was written with the objective to be a strict attendance policy would guarantee low absence rates would be effective. The study used urban high school students as the targeted population, and monitored their absence rates and their adherence to the school's attendance policy. The district's attendance policy goals, objectives and administrative framework, and demographic data were studied and assessed in order to critically review the school district and its student's absence rates. The results revealed that the newly implemented district attendance policy was effective and did improve student absence rates, and the overall attendance patterns of all students at Lafayette High School.

Branham (2004) examined the effect of school infrastructure on student attendance. In this study, Branham examined 226 schools in Houston Texas in order to determine if the school's attendance was affected by the school's environment. The results indicated that the quality of school infrastructure does have a significant effect on school attendance and drop-out rates. Students were less likely to attend schools that were in need of structural repair, used temporary structures, such as portables, and those schools that were understaffed with janitorial services.

Branham also concluded that school districts that wished to maximize attendance and minimize drop-out rates should avoid temporary solutions and provide students, teachers, and administrators with quality, permanent structured schools, as well as quality janitorial staffs to maintain those schools (Branham, 2004).

Relationship of Absences to Achievement

Student achievement has been affected in a negative way by the rates of absenteeism (Roby, 2004). One factor that is relevant to higher student achievement could be improved student absences. The variable of student attendance has been often overlooked and taken for granted as a meaningful statistic; in essence the positive impact of student attendance in the classroom on academic achievement may be greater than historically thought (Roby, 2004, p. 4).

Sexton (2003) indicated that students who do not attend school on a regular basis and possess a high number of absences registered low scores on state and national assessments as well. Furthermore Strickland (1999) and Foy (2005) agreed that the low assessment scores are indicative of low graduation rates, and the increase of dropout rates. Schools need to be aware that a school system's attendance policy plays a major factor in classroom performance and school's meeting, or not meeting AYP goals (Strickland, 1999, Foy, 2005 & Mora, 1997). NCES (2002) stated missing students in the classroom hurt performance efforts, because missing class work hinders other students from progressing because subjects will need to be retaught and a continual repetition of the material must be taught in class.

Hearn (1992) replicated a study by Baum and Youngblood which was conducted in 1975 in order to investigate whether compulsory attendance laws had an impact on student achievement. The results indicated that with the addition of attendance pressure

in the form of compulsory attendance rules, absenteeism was reduced, performance on exams improved, and there was no reduction in satisfaction with either the instructor or the course. Variables that predicted middle school academic achievement were 8th grade low absenteeism rates, student scores on different aptitude tests, economic status, and attendance in K-5th grades (Galloway, 1985).

Hassler (1993) used a multiple regression analysis to describe the relationship between average daily absence rates at four middle schools. Hassler used the demographic variables of academic achievement, socioeconomic status, and performance on a national test. The performance variables were measured by using the 8th grade results from the Comprehensive Assessment Program (CAP), which is a norm-referenced, nationally standardized test. The results of the study revealed that of the factors which were analyzed, academic achievement as measured by the CAP was the only factor that was influenced by the rates of attendance in all four schools.

In another study, Jimerson et. al. (2001) found that in 2000, the dropout rate for students 16 to 24 years old was 10.9% or 3.8 million young adults according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The study also revealed that absenteeism was usually an indicator for potentially dropping out of high school. The conclusions of the study stated that 75% of career truants did not graduate, and as adults, the former truants always were prone to more deviant behavior, to be paid lower wages, and even to experience more psychological problems.

Glanton (2001) indicated in his study that in order to enhance student learning, school systems across the country needed to implement creative strategies that would in turn increase school attendance and achievement by using several methods. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of the Freshman Academy Program (FAP) on grade point

average, attendance, tardiness, and discipline while using a curricular block schedule. The dependent variables examined included: 1) academic grade point average, 2) attendance, 3) tardiness, and 4) out-of-school suspensions. The comparison was selected based on similar enrollment, minority composition, and socio-economic status.

Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the grade point average, attendance, tardiness, and out-of-school suspensions due to student misbehavior of students who participated in a Freshman Academy Program. Specifically the Freshman Academy Program proved to be less effective than the traditional program when comparing grade point averages and student tardiness. However, it was more effective when comparing student absenteeism and the number of days students were suspended out-of-school due to misbehavior.

In another study, Daugherty (2008) investigated whether the attendance of students in grades 8 and 10 had an effect on their academic performance with the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) in reading and math exams. The subjects of this study were selected from two grade levels in one Delaware school district over a three-year period. This study used ex post facto data from 2005 through 2007 and used the DSTP reading and math test scores as dependent variables. The independent variables were days absent from school, gender, race, special education status, English language learner status, and socio-economic status.

The results in Daugherty's study (2008) showed that the higher the percentage average of absenteeism, the lower the student performance averaged. Eighth and tenth grade math mean scale scores fell below the state proficiency level when students missed sixteen or more days of school. In reading, both eighth and tenth grade mean scale scores

fell below the state proficiency levels when students missed seventeen or more days of school. The study also indicated that there was a relationship between student achievement, scale scores, and daily attendance.

Shutts' (2000) research on the relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement in Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County Public Schools determined that there was a relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement based on scores from achievement tests. However, Shutt only divided the absentees into two groups: students who missed twelve or fewer days and those who were absent over twelve days.

An updated study conducted by Davis (2003) was designed to determine at what point the absenteeism affected academic achievement based on standardized test scores. The sample for Davis' study was 936 freshman students, who took both the Algebra I and Biology Gateway exams, attending 14 public high schools in Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County Public Schools during the 2002-2003 school year. Students who were not enrolled at least 90 days during the school year were eliminated from the study.

The Davis study examined the relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement by using the following variables: (a) sex, (b) ethnicity, (c) school attended, and (d) number of days absent. The absences were divided into three day increments. There was a negative correlation found between the number of days absent and academic achievement as measured by the Algebra I and Biology Gateway exams.

Results indicated that there was a statistically significant negative effect on the Algebra I Gateway exam after only three days of absence. This study found that absenteeism affected Black and White students at a statistically significant level while Asian and Hispanic students were not significantly affected. The difference in

achievement between the different levels of absenteeism was found to be basically the same for both male and female students regardless of race. Lastly, there were significant differences in the effect of absenteeism among the different schools which were used in the study. The study results were tested at .01 alpha levels. The significant difference led Davis to conclude that there was a need for parents, students and school authorities to realize the need for compulsory attendance policies in their school systems.

Summary

In order to review key points within the literature review, the researcher revisited several areas in order to strengthen the objective of the study to provide research studies which could provide information to benefit the study's analysis of other local school district initiatives to improve student attendance subsequent to the passage of the NCLB act. The review of literature consisted of nine areas:

- finding out what the requirements are for meeting set goals of the NCLB Act,
- researching the early history of compulsory attendance policies in education,
- identifying support for compulsory attendance laws,
- depicting the beginning history of compulsory attendance in Georgia,
- examining the rules and regulations of school attendance in Wayne County, Georgia,
- observation of other empirical studies which deal with compulsory attendance laws,
- showing other studies which have examined the causes of absences,
- identifying the different types of attendance policies,
- examining the relationship which may exist between attendance and achievement.

The review of studies indicated that the requirements for meeting the set goals of the NCLB act involved thirty-seven categories of rules and regulations, which could affect

the school districts that would meet, or not meet AYP standards. Research also indicated that the institution of the NCLB act reinstated, restored and revamped old educational laws that were instituted in order to solve past social ills which began as early as the Industrial Revolution. Compulsory attendance was the solution during this era in educational history because parents, employers, and other state agencies could not sacrifice the education of children in order to benefit America's economy, nor the parent's self interest.

America's continued emphasis to adopt compulsory attendance laws caused states, such as Georgia to adopt an interest in not only at-risk populations, but all students. Georgia realized that their absence rates played a key part in meeting accountability standards. Research has also revealed that the absence rates were not only important, but also the basis of justification for the county's district attendance policy, not to mention a strategic design to lower absence rates.

Empirical studies further revealed that the overall objective is that all schools must meet AYP, and monitoring attendance rates for each school district regardless of district characteristics was key to assisting in meeting state and national standards. The causes of low absence rates and chronic absenteeism among the student population has been varied and include a student's home environment, their social status, whether or not a child is deprived from basic needs, such as food, clothing, and adequate living conditions. Other determinants of chronic absenteeism included child abuse, no parental supervision, substance abuse, and even frequent acts of violence within the family, or the student's own life.

The review of literature was conclusive by also identifying the need to recognize the different types of attendance policies which would be needed to deter and monitor the causes

which may have caused students to miss school. Those policies revealed that the lack of attendance actually affected classroom learning, yet there were no identifiable studies which determined if a relationship existed based upon the implementation of the new attendance policies.

However, the studies did identify that most policies consisted of the following; a reward and punishment system, school academic sanctions, student failure to be promoted to the next grade level, and student and parent accountability techniques which held both parties responsible for not meeting attendance policy requirements. Studies also revealed that there was a need for more studies to determine how the implementation of NCLB has affected school absence rates, and whether or not the enactment of such a law has helped in meeting the new accountability standards through the revision of state attendance policies.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter described the research conducted to fulfill the purpose of this study. The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of local school district responses to improve absence rates after the implementation of the NCLB Act. The overarching question for this research was, “Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and the subsequent changes in attendance policies?” The following sub-questions guided the over-arching research question.

1. What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?
2. What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia county that was observed in this study?
3. Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rates once school and district factors are taken into account?

Sample

District Selection Criteria

The criteria the researcher established was to identify the school districts based upon absence rates which were lowest and highest for years after the implementation of NCLB (2005-2007). The absence rate calculation was done by dividing the number of students in AYP grade levels who were absent more than 15 days by the total number of students in AYP grade levels. See Table 3.1 School Districts Based on Second Indicator Absence Rates

In order to identify the absence rates, the researcher retrieved the needed data from the GDOE website, which included the four academic school years and data for the students who

Table 3.1

School Districts Based on Second Indicator Absence Rates

| School Districts | | Percentage | Percentage | Percentage | Percentage | 4-Year |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| with the Lowest | | of Schools | of Schools | of Schools | of Schools | Overall |
| Absence Rates | | Within | Within | Within | Within | Mean |
| | | Districts | Districts | Districts | Districts | Average |
| | | Which Made | Which Made | Which Made | Which Made | Percentile |
| | | AYP | AYP | AYP | AYP | |
| | | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | |
| 1 | Walker | 93.0 | 92.9 | 100.0 | 85.7 | 92.9 |
| 2 | Valdosta City | 89.0 | 100.0 | 77.8 | 88.9 | 88.9 |
| 3 | Columbia County | 71.4 | 85.7 | 85.7 | 100.0 | 85.7 |
| 4 | Ware County | 67.0 | 67.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 83.5 |
| 5 | Mitchell | 80.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 |
| 6 | Bulloch County | 67.0 | 100.0 | 67.0 | 67.0 | 75.2 |
| 7 | Macon | 67.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 33.3 | 75.1 |
| 8 | Wilkes County | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 75.0 |
| 9 | Fulton County | 55.6 | 85.7 | 76.2 | 76.2 | 73.4 |
| 10 | Barrow County | 67.0 | 67.0 | 100.0 | 50.0 | 71.4 |
| 11 | Gwinnett County | 75.0 | 65.0 | 60.0 | 85.0 | 71.3 |
| 12 | Cobb County | 61.9 | 61.9 | 66.7 | 70.8 | 65.3 |
| 13 | McIntosh | 33.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 64.5 |
| 14 | Marietta City | 0.0 | 100.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 | 62.5 |
| 15 | Wayne County | 50.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 62.5 |

Table 3.1 continued

School Districts Based on Second Indicator Absence Rates

| School Districts | Percentage | Percentage | Percentage | Percentage | 4-Year |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| with the Highest | of Schools | of Schools | of Schools | of Schools | Overall |
| Absence Rates | Within | Within | Within | Within | Mean |
| | Districts | Districts | Districts | Districts | Average |
| | Which Made | Which Made | Which Made | Which Made | Percentile |
| | AYP | AYP | AYP | AYP | |
| | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | |
| 16 Henry County | 66.7 | 28.7 | 85.7 | 62.5 | 60.9 |
| 17 DeKalb County | 55.6 | 63.2 | 63.2 | 52.4 | 58.6 |
| 18 Atlanta City | 19.0 | 61.9 | 68.2 | 68.2 | 54.3 |
| 19 Chatham County | 20.0 | 36.3 | 63.6 | 81.8 | 50.4 |
| 20 Tift County | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 50.0 |
| 21 Burke County | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 50.0 |
| 22 Hall County | 67.0 | 50.0 | 33.3 | 50.0 | 50.1 |
| 23 Madison County | 100.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 50.0 |
| 24 Jenkins County | 0.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 50.0 |
| 25 Muscogee County | 9.0 | 27.2 | 63.6 | 50.0 | 37.5 |
| 26 Bibb County | 40.0 | 16.6 | 33.3 | 28.5 | 29.6 |
| 27 Clayton County | 9.0 | 18.1 | 30.8 | 46.7 | 26.2 |
| 28 Seminole County | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 25.0 |
| 29 Washington Co. | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 25.0 |
| 30 Richmond County | 10.0 | 10.0 | 30.0 | 20.0 | 17.5 |

missed over 15 days during the school year. After these calculations, any school district with an average AYP attendance rate score of 62.5% or higher was chosen as part of the school districts with the lowest absence rates, and any school district with an average AYP attendance of 60.9% or lower was chosen as one of the school districts with the highest absence rates.

After the district absence rates were retrieved, the researcher was able to determine if the absence rates during the four years would identify whether or not the district's middle school met the state second indicator standard in the area of school attendance. While the data of interest were absence rates of middle school students with more than 15 absences, the data collected at the school level was averaged for each academic school year.

For example, a district's middle school absence rates were retrieved and those rates for each school year beginning with the 2003-2004 academic school year were collected and averaged for each year across the four subsequent years. See Table 3.1 School Districts Based on Second Indicator Absence Rates.

District Selection Procedure

When accessing the 2003-2007 Governor's Office of Student Accountability website, the researcher retrieved the AYP reports in the area of absence rates only. Since AYP was established in three different areas, (i.e. Test Participation, Academic Performance and Second Indicator), one must retrieve only the second indicator, which in Georgia middle schools is absence rates. By retrieving the district statistical data for each of the academic school years 2003-2007, the researcher was able to fulfill the selection procedure for the study, which was identification of the school districts with respect to their improvements in attendance.

Description of Sample

The sample of this study included 189 middle schools within 30 school districts that qualified for the study. There were 17 urban school districts and 13 rural school districts. The largest urban school district was Gwinnett County which had sixteen middle schools; this district also educated a total of 128,063 middle school students with an average student population of 32,016 during the four years of this study. The smallest district was Seminole County, which had only one middle school and a total of 488 students during the four years of the study. See Table 3.2 Middle School Size in Georgia.

The total middle school student population was 751,212 during the four academic school years (2003-2007). The mean pre-NCLB absence rate of Georgia school districts was 12.77, and the mean-NCLB post absence rate was 9.71%. The result indicated that during the four academic school years of the study, most middle school students attended schools and did not miss over 15 days. The absence rates of the middle schools and their associated school districts can be viewed in the Appendix. See Table 3.2 Middle School Size in Georgia.

The sample data also included the socio-economically disadvantaged population status (SES) of each school district. The number of SES students was based upon the free/reduced lunch data. The four years of the study revealed that the total SES population receiving free/reduced lunch funds within the 189 middle schools was 57.78% of the population. Gwinnett County, the largest school district indicated that of its 16 middle schools, the SES rate was 36.3%. See Table 3.3 SES Free/Reduced Lunch School Districts.

Table 3.2

Middle School Size in Georgia

| County | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | Total |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| | School Year | School Year | School Year | School Year | Students |
| Gwinnett County | 32470 | 30582 | 31944 | 33067 | 128063 |
| Cobb County | 27052 | 27175 | 26113 | 23635 | 103975 |
| Dekalb County | 26252 | 25161 | 23948 | 23237 | 98598 |
| Fulton County | 6288 | 17121 | 17607 | 17092 | 58108 |
| Atlanta City | 14741 | 14447 | 13923 | 13725 | 56836 |
| Clayton County | 4879 | 15064 | 13498 | 12774 | 46215 |
| Richmond County | 9377 | 8979 | 8543 | 8101 | 35000 |
| Henry County | 2779 | 8188 | 8340 | 7251 | 26558 |
| Chatham County | 3002 | 9458 | 9101 | 8938 | 30499 |
| Muscogee County | 3533 | 8590 | 8478 | 8894 | 29495 |
| Bibb County | 4967 | 4947 | 4847 | 4365 | 19126 |
| McIntosh County | 518 | 537 | 521 | 506 | 2082 |
| Walker County | 1774 | 1753 | 1638 | 1636 | 6801 |
| Columbia County | 5441 | 5598 | 5650 | 5666 | 22355 |
| Hall County | 1934 | 5940 | 6064 | 6172 | 20110 |
| Valdosta County | 2009 | 1984 | 1895 | 1871 | 7759 |
| Barrow County | 886 | 2680 | 1540 | 2204 | 7310 |
| Marietta City | 2139 | 2101 | 2031 | 1924 | 8195 |
| Bulloch County | 668 | 2101 | 2035 | 2001 | 6805 |

Table 3.2 continued

Middle School Size in Georgia

| County | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | Total |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| | School Year | School Year | School Year | School Year | Students |
| Ware County | 1668 | 1610 | 1546 | 1468 | 6292 |
| Mitchell County | 623 | 557 | 548 | 511 | 2239 |
| Wayne County | 1423 | 1469 | 1361 | 1344 | 5597 |
| Burke County | 1296 | 1249 | 1208 | 1200 | 4953 |
| Madison County | 1241 | 1247 | 1221 | 1215 | 4924 |
| Tift County | 663 | 1255 | 1283 | 1281 | 4482 |
| Washington County | 310 | 998 | 931 | 872 | 3111 |
| Wilkes County | 453 | 436 | 408 | 411 | 1708 |
| Jenkins County | 142 | 464 | 447 | 401 | 1454 |
| Macon County | 559 | 535 | 484 | 496 | 2074 |
| Seminole County | 124 | 123 | 127 | 114 | 488 |
| Total Attendance Size | 159211 | 202349 | 197280 | 192372 | 751212 |
| per year | | | | | |

Table 3.3

SES Free/Reduced Lunch School Districts

| School District | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Name | Data 2004 | Data 2005 | Data 2006 | Data 2007 | Mean/Average |
| Atlanta City | 63.36 | 64.98 | 74.88 | 78.76 | 70.50 |
| Barrow County | 26.55 | 31.82 | 41.77 | 48.26 | 37.10 |
| Bibb County | 49.66 | 62.67 | 65.38 | 80.51 | 64.56 |
| Bulloch County | 58.16 | 58.54 | 59.38 | 58.20 | 58.57 |
| Burke County | 84.73 | 81.72 | 80.63 | 82.98 | 82.52 |
| Chatham County | 59.36 | 63.22 | 66.47 | 66.65 | 63.92 |
| Clayton County | 54.91 | 57.38 | 67.21 | 78.01 | 64.38 |
| Cobb County | 26.03 | 29.05 | 30.32 | 36.25 | 30.39 |
| Columbia County | 25.65 | 28.04 | 27.86 | 28.49 | 27.51 |
| Dekalb County | 55.59 | 60.74 | 62.53 | 66.38 | 61.31 |
| Fulton County | 28.76 | 33.92 | 35.77 | 36.01 | 33.61 |
| Gwinnett County | 25.90 | 35.03 | 40.58 | 43.71 | 36.31 |
| Hall County | 44.20 | 47.46 | 48.70 | 51.38 | 47.93 |
| Henry County | 17.81 | 26.58 | 31.70 | 38.82 | 28.73 |
| Jenkins County | 77.20 | 76.64 | 77.23 | 76.22 | 76.82 |
| Macon County | 82.10 | 84.68 | 78.30 | 77.49 | 80.64 |
| Madison County | 43.98 | 49.30 | 48.35 | 49.47 | 47.78 |
| Marietta City | 43.37 | 47.89 | 47.66 | 47.85 | 46.69 |
| McIntosh County | 77.62 | 80.37 | 76.22 | 74.68 | 77.22 |
| Mitchell County | 49.29 | 64.59 | 64.68 | 61.51 | 60.02 |
| Muscogee County | 55.11 | 55.45 | 62.04 | 68.86 | 60.37 |
| Richmond County | 74.35 | 78.30 | 76.65 | 75.71 | 76.25 |

Table 3.3 continued

SES Free/Reduced Lunch School Districts

| School District | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch | Free Lunch |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Name | Data 2004 | Data 2005 | Data 2006 | Data 2007 | Mean/Average |
| Seminole County | 65.81 | 68.18 | 66.70 | 68.48 | 67.29 |
| Tift County | 57.52 | 55.92 | 59.95 | 58.86 | 58.06 |
| Valdosta County | 74.59 | 68.19 | 74.06 | 75.43 | 73.07 |
| Walker County | 57.28 | 58.92 | 61.24 | 65.73 | 60.79 |
| Ware County | 52.49 | 52.86 | 57.01 | 53.54 | 53.97 |
| Washington Co. | 66.56 | 65.81 | 64.61 | 64.26 | 65.31 |
| Wayne County | 54.77 | 59.06 | 58.435 | 58.35 | 57.65 |
| Wilkes County | 63.74 | 61.81 | 64.71 | 66.84 | 64.28 |
| <hr/> | | | | | |
| 30 District | | | | | |
| SES/ Free Lunch % | 53.88 | 56.97 | 59.03 | 61.26 | 57.78 |

Another part of the sample was the number of Title I/non-Title I schools within each school district. Data revealed that there were 109 Title I middle schools and 80 non -Title I middle schools in the study. Gwinnett County only had three middle schools out of the 16 that were classified as Title I. See Table 3.4 Independent Variable: Title I School Districts.

Table 3.4

Independent Variable: Title I School Districts

| School District | Title I Schools 2006-07 | Title I Schools 2005-06 | Title I Schools 2004-05 | Title I Schools 2003-04 |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Atlanta City | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Barrow County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bibb County | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Bulloch County | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Burke County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Chatham County | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Clayton County | 13 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Cobb County | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Columbia County | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Dekalb County | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Fulton County | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Macon County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mitchell County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Valdosta County | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Walker County | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| McIntosh County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Gwinnett County | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Hall County | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Table 3.4 continued

Independent Variable: Title I School Districts

| School District | Title I Schools 2006-07 | Title I Schools 2005-06 | Title I Schools 2004-05 | Title I Schools 2003-04 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Henry County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Jenkins County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Madison County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Marietta City | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Muscogee County | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Richmond County | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Seminole County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Tift County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ware County | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Washington County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Wayne County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wilkes County | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total Title I Schools | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 |

Questionnaire Participants

The questionnaire described in the materials/instrument section that follows was used to assess opinions of an administrator, a teacher, parents, and the students' making of the severity of district attendance policies. The next procedure was the selection of the questionnaire participants. The researcher chose ten volunteers to participate in answering the questionnaire. A middle school administrator and teacher approved the questionnaire's participants and also

agreed to participate themselves. The other participants were comprised of six middle school students, and two middle school parents. This process is described in more detail under the heading, “Participant Selection Criteria” that follows within the study.

Data Sources

Dependent Variable: Absence Rates

Data were gathered to address the dependent variable of post-NCLB policy absence rates for students with more than 15 absences from the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) No Child Left Behind website for Georgia schools (GDOE, 2004). The dependent variable was absence rates for each middle school for the two years subsequent to the enactment of the NCLB Act (2005-2007). See Table 3.6 Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates.

Independent Variables: 30 School District Attendance Policies

The five independent variables classified as covariates were:

- the district’s attendance policy severity rating,
- the middle school’s Title I /Non Title I status,
- the socio-economic status (SES) established by free/reduced lunch data,
- the middle school’s population size,
- and the pre- NCLB policy absence rates during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

The independent variable, attendance policy severity rating had two classifications. The first classification was the mean severity rating, and the second procedure was the count of the severest policies. Further discussion of this particular independent variable and its descriptive statistics are treated in Chapter four.

The independent variable, the identification of the thirty district attendance policies was derived from the GDOE website. The site offered the Georgia State attendance policy,

Georgia's Attendance Law, and an exemplary model that could be used by other Georgia counties in order to develop their district's attendance policy.

The site also offered documents to model after, as well as tips and directions that other school districts could use to decrease their absence rates. The site was extensive and the recommendations for improved attendance policies did cite that their suggestions were research based, and the information was adapted as best practices. See Table 3.5 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating.

The researcher was able to find information relating to the second independent variable, the school's classification as a Title I or non-Title I school, from the GDOE website, (www.doe.k12.ga.us) by searching for the most recent annual yearly progress report which for this study was the 2006-2007 AYP Report. This report provided information by district and then by middle school within the district. The website also supplied charts and tables of the Title-I schools and non-Title I schools. See Table 3.4 Independent Variable: Title I School Districts.

The third variable was the percentage of free and reduced lunch recipients within the 189 middle schools from the thirty school districts from 2003-2007. This information was retrieved from the Georgia Department of Education: Free and Reduced Price Meal Eligibility and listed as the Office of Technology Services (Office of Technology Services, 2004), or the web address: http://app.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_frl001_public.entry form
See Table 3.4 SES Free/Reduced Lunch School Districts

Table 3.5

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating

| COMPONENTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | Mean |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs Notification | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5=10 abs intervention | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6= Intervention Plan | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7-ISS Suspension | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8=Home Suspension Ownership | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9=Loss of Driver License | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11=School Withdrawal | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12=Length of Policy 10+ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13=Monetary fine | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14=Parental | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15=Incentive program | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16=Local Policy | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17=Fines over \$1000.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18=Attendance Protocol Committee | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19=Parents Jailed | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20= Loss of custody | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21-Child Jailed | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| McIntosh | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | | 3.1 | | 2.00 |
| Muscogee | | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | | 1.7 | | | | 3.1 | | 2.00 |
| Seminole | | | 1.6 | | 2.2 | | | | | 3.1 | | 2.06 |
| Washington | | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | | 2.26 |
| Mitchell | | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | 3.1 | 3.8 | | 3.6 | 2.41 |
| Bulloch | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.42 |
| Dekalb | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | | | 2.9 | | | 3.1 | | 1.99 |
| Macon | | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | | 2.52 |
| Tift | 1.4 | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | | 2.455 |
| Valdosta | 1.4 | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | | 2.46 |
| Henry | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | | 3.1 | | 1.987 |
| Bibb | | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.653 |
| Burke | 1.4 | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.43 |
| Hall | | 1.7 | | | 2.2 | | | | | 3.1 | | 2.38 |
| Barrow | | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.44 |
| Marietta | | 1.7 | | 2.5 | 2.2 | | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.45 |
| Madison | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.29 |
| Jenkins | 1.4 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 2.9 | | 3.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 | 2.35 |

Table 3.5 continued

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | | | | | | 8=Home Suspension Ownership | | | | | | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | | | | | | 9=Loss of Driver License | | | | | | 16=Local Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | | | | | | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | | | | | | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs Notification | | | | | | 11=School Withdrawal | | | | | | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | | | | | | 12=Length of Policy 10+ | | | | | | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | | | | | | 13=Monetary fine | | | | | | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7-ISS Suspension | | | | | | 14=Parental | | | | | | 21-Child Jailed |
| COMPONENTS | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | Mean | |
| McIntosh | | | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | | | 2.00 | |
| Muscogee | 2.0 | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 2.00 | |
| Seminole | | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 2.06 | |
| Washington | 2.0 | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 2.26 | |
| Mitchell | | | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | | | 2.41 | |
| Bulloch | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.42 | |
| Dekalb | | | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | | | 1.99 | |
| Macon | 2.0 | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | 4.0 | 2.52 | |
| Tift | | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.455 | |
| Valdosta | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.46 | |
| Henry | | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 1.987 | |
| Bibb | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | 4.0 | 2.653 | |
| Burke | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.43 | |
| Hall | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.38 | |
| Barrow | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.44 | |
| Marietta | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | | | 2.45 | |

Table 3.5 continued

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | | | | | | 8=Home Suspension Ownership | | | | | | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | | | | | | 9=Loss of Driver License | | | | | | 16=Local Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | | | | | | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | | | | | | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs Notification | | | | | | 11=School Withdrawal | | | | | | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | | | | | | 12=Length of Policy 10+ | | | | | | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | | | | | | 13=Monetary fine | | | | | | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7-ISS Suspension | | | | | | 14=Parental | | | | | | 21-Child Jailed |
| COMPONENTS | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | Mean | |
| Madison | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 2.29 | |
| Jenkins | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.35 | |
| Ware | | | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | | | | 2.34 | |
| Columbia | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | | 2.654 | |
| Fulton | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.49 | |
| Richmond | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | 4.0 | 2.58 | |
| Cobb | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | | | 2.45 | |
| Wayne | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | | 2.32 | |
| Atlanta | | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | | 2.55 | |
| Walker | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | | 3.6 | 2.0 | 4.0 | | 4.0 | 2.65 | |
| Gwinnett | 2.0 | | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.1 | | 2.0 | 4.0 | | 4.0 | 2.458 | |
| Chatham | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.1 | | 2.0 | | 3.9 | 4.0 | 2.32 | |
| Clayton | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | | 2.1 | 3.6 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 2.71 | |
| Wilkes | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 3.6 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 2.59 | |
| State Policy | | | 1.4 | | | 2.1 | | | 2.0 | | | |
| Components | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The fourth independent variable was each middle school's size averaged across the four years of the study which was retrieved from GDOE website. The data revealed that the largest school district was Gwinnett followed by other Atlanta metropolitan based school districts. The large school districts also had large middle schools as well.

For example, Gwinnett's school district average was 32,016 students during the four year period; their largest middle school, Frank North, averaged a total of 2,969 students during the time of the study. Whereas Seminole County which had only one middle school within its district, the district averaged only 122 students during the 4-year span of the study. See Table 3.2 Middle School Size in Georgia.

The next independent variable within the study was the pre- NCLB policy absence rates during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic school year. As the fifth variable, the state criteria used to determine a student's absence rates were not mandated as a part of the accountability requirement until the 2005-2006 year, so the results were retrievable only as data from each school district. The researcher used the GDOE website to retrieve attendance data from each school district within the study and placed all data within table and chart forms. See Table 3.6 Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates.

See Table 3.6

Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates

| School District | Absence Rates 2003-04 | Absence Rates 2004-05 | Pre-NCLB Absence Rates (03-04)(04-05) | Absence Rates 2005-06 | Absence Rates 2006-07 | Post-NCLB Absence Rates (05-06)(06-07) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Dekalb | 12.11 | 11.93 | 12.02 | 11.26 | 11.2 | 11.23 |
| Atlanta | 16.66 | 9.457 | 13.06 | 9 | 4.86 | 6.94 |
| Bulloch | 17 | 14.9 | 15.9 | 16.36 | 14.8 | 15.58 |
| Burke | 8.7 | 8.4 | 8.55 | 6.3 | 8.2 | 7.25 |
| Chatham | 19.88 | 16.49 | 18.18 | 13.25 | 14.13 | 13.7 |
| Barrow | 16.36 | 15.7 | 16.03 | 11.9 | 9.8 | 10.85 |
| Bibb | 19.26 | 19.42 | 19.34 | 17.14 | 14.28 | 15.71 |
| Cobb | 11.66 | 8.83 | 10.25 | 8.21 | 7.79 | 8 |
| Columbia | 11.37 | 8.84 | 10.1 | 7.15 | 6.77 | 6.96 |
| Fulton | 18.77 | 8.09 | 13.44 | 7.22 | 7.57 | 7.38 |
| Gwinnett | 10.15 | 7.26 | 8.71 | 6.11 | 6.14 | 6.13 |
| Madison | 19.8 | 14.8 | 14.3 | 15.6 | 14.9 | 15.25 |
| Jenkins | 29.5 | 14.4 | 22 | 12.1 | 12.7 | 12.4 |
| Hall | 9.03 | 10.13 | 9.59 | 8.92 | 7.68 | 8.3 |
| Henry | 13.48 | 11.71 | 12.6 | 8.92 | 9.11 | 9.01 |
| Marrietta | 11.9 | 10.45 | 11.17 | 10.35 | 10.2 | 10.28 |
| Muscogee | 20.44 | 15.65 | 18.04 | 14.61 | 14 | 14.28 |
| Seminole | 17.8 | 16.2 | 17 | 12.9 | 8.2 | 10.55 |
| Washington | 11.1 | 9.9 | 10.5 | 9.9 | 6.2 | 8.05 |
| Tift | 15 | 14.2 | 14.6 | 13.1 | 8.3 | 10.7 |
| Ware | 12.1 | 12.37 | 12.2 | 10.2 | 6.4 | 8.33 |

See Table 3.6 continued

Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates

| School | Absence | Absence | Pre-NCLB | Absence | Absence | Post-NCLB |
|----------|---------|---------|----------------|---------|---------|----------------|
| District | Rates | Rates | Absence Rates | Rates | Rates | Absence Rates |
| | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | (03-04)(04-05) | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | (05-06)(06-07) |
| Richmond | 14.7 | 15.74 | 15.2 | 11.97 | 12.14 | 12.1 |
| Wayne | 12.5 | 10.15 | 11.33 | 6.85 | 6.75 | 6.8 |
| Clayton | 14.81 | 13.56 | 14.19 | 12.36 | 11.94 | 12.1 |
| Macon | 14 | 10.1 | 12.05 | 9.9 | 15.7 | 12.8 |
| Mitchell | 0.5 | 14.9 | 7.7 | 15.9 | 7.8 | 11.85 |
| Valdosta | 17.95 | 11.25 | 14.6 | 10.6 | 7.8 | 9.2 |
| Walker | 26.4 | 21.75 | 24.08 | 11.25 | 7.4 | 9.325 |
| McIntosh | 15.1 | 14 | 14.55 | 11.5 | 14 | 12.75 |
| Wilkes | 4.4 | 2.1 | 3.25 | 2.9 | 7.3 | 5.1 |
| Totals | 13.999 | 11.533 | 12.766 | 10.122 | 9.292 | 9.707 |

Materials/Instruments Section

Questionnaire Development

The first task was to create a composite of the attendance policies of the 30 districts. To accomplish this, the researcher analyzed the attendance policy of the first district by making note of each policy component relating to punishment or rewards. These data were entered in a table. The researcher then proceeded to the next district placing a check mark in the table by each component that was found in the policy of the first school district and adding any new components as they appeared when analyzing the attendance policy of that district. This process was repeated for the remaining 28 school districts.

After carefully notating all punishments and rewards within the thirty school district attendance policies, a table was developed listing the 21 identified components. While examining the attendance policies of the thirty selected school districts, the researcher was able to categorize the policies based upon similar features. This analysis was done based on the information which appeared in the policies concerning their rules and regulations for those students who were repeat offenders of the district's attendance policy.

Finally, the researcher decided that after reading and making notations of the differences within the policies, one should consolidate the thirty different attendance policies into one document. This consolidation became the creation of a table that would identify 21 different components of the policies. The policies were then formed into a questionnaire for the ten participants (described under Questionnaire Participants and Selection Procedure) who would then be able to rate attendance policy severity using a scale of one (least severe) to four (most severe). After the consolidation of components, the researcher attained individual ratings of

severity for each of them by using the questionnaire and ten participants. See Table 3.7

Questionnaire Attendance Policy Components Rating.

Table 3.7

Questionnaire Attendance Policy Components Rating

| | <i>Attendance Policy Components</i> | <i>Student Score</i> | <i>Adult Score</i> | <i>Student Score</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Mean Average</i> |
|----|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | The attendance policy has a tardy policy which gives rules and punishment for offenders. | 1,1,1,1 | 1,1,4,1 | 1,2 | 14 | 1.4 |
| 2 | The attendance policy has a student intervention plan developed by the school officials for offenders. | 1,1,3,1 | 1,1,2,2 | 4,1 | 17 | 1.7 |
| 3 | The attendance policy requires that the school withdraws students who have been absent over 10 days. | 4,3,3,4 | 3,3,4,4 | 4,4 | 36 | 3.6 |
| 4 | The attendance policy was written by school officials who were given freedom to devise plan of action to lower absences/tardies. | 1,4,2,1 | 4,3,2,2 | 1,1 | 21 | 2.1 |
| 5 | The attendance policy states that the school will intervene with a letter to the parent at 5 absentees. | 1,1,1,1 | 3,3,2,2 | 1,2 | 17 | 1.7 |
| 6 | The attendance policy states that there should be an In-House Suspension (ISS) program for offenders. | 2,1,1,4 | 2,4,4,4 | 4,3 | 29 | 2.9 |
| 7 | The attendance policy is at least 10 pages or more in length and contains numerous offense rules. | 2,2,1,3 | 4,1,1,2 | 1,3 | 20 | 2.0 |
| 8 | The attendance policy requires that parents are fined over \$1000.00 if the student continues absences. | 4,4,4,4 | 2,3,3,4 | 4,4 | 36 | 3.6 |
| 9 | The attendance policy has a student intervention plan before the student reaches a total of 5 absences. | 1,1,1,2 | 3,2,1,1 | 3,1 | 16 | 1.6 |
| 10 | The attendance policy states that students should be assigned Home Suspension for high absences. | 4,4,4,3 | 4,3,2,1 | 4,2 | 31 | 3.1 |
| 11 | The attendance policy requires that parents are fined at least \$25.00 if student continues absences. | 2,2,1,2 | 2,3,4,2 | 3,4 | 25 | 2.5 |

Table 3.7 continued

Questionnaire Attendance Policy Components Rating

| | <i>Attendance Policy Components</i> | <i>Student Score</i> | <i>Adult Score</i> | <i>Student Score</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Mean Average</i> |
|----|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 12 | The attendance policy states that a student is declared “truant” at 5 absentees based upon state law. | 1,1,2,3 | 3,4,2,1 | 4,4 | 25 | 2.5 |
| 13 | The attendance policy states that students will lose their Driver’s License for excessive absences. | 4,4,2,4 | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4 | 38 | 3.8 |
| 14 | The attendance policy states that parents must be notified daily of their child’s absences. | 1,1,1,3 | 1,1,1,3 | 1,1 | 14 | 1.4 |
| 15 | The attendance policy states that parents are sent to jail because of their child’s excessive absences. | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4 | 40 | 4.0 |
| 16 | The attendance policy states that students receive a punishment plan at 10 absences. | 2,3,1,4 | 2,3,2,2 | 2,1 | 22 | 2.2 |
| 17 | The attendance policy states that parents will lose custody of their children after excessive absences. | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4 | 40 | 4.0 |
| 18 | The attendance policy states that school must have Protocol Committee to write the policy and monitor school absences. | 1,1,4,3 | 3,2,1,1 | 3,1 | 20 | 2.0 |
| 19 | The attendance policy states that there is an incentive and reward program (i.e. certificates, money, etc.) | 2,1,2,1 | 1,1,1,1 | 1,1 | 12 | 1.2 |
| 20 | The attendance policy states that the school’s system uses a judge, a social worker, and/or DFACS to help decrease absences. | 4,2,3,3 | 4,4,4,4 | 2,1 | 31 | 3.1 |
| 21 | The attendance policy states that the student is jailed if he/she does not attend school on a regular basis. | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4,4,4 | 4,4 | 40 | 4.0 |

Selection Procedure

Participant selection criteria.

The criteria for questionnaire participants were as follows: The administrator who should be chosen must be a principal of a middle school, the teacher chosen to administer the test must have at least 3-years experience as an educator. The student selection criteria were fourfold; all students must be eighth graders who are finishing their last year of middle school, attending an at-risk middle school, familiar with the school's attendance policy and have parents who must be familiar with the school's attendance policy as well.

Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to assess administrator, teacher, parents', and students' rankings of the severity of district attendance policies. A copy of the questionnaire was given to each participant. The participants asked to complete the questionnaire were a convenient sample from an after-school program. Using their own questionnaire, each of the participants was asked to rank the components based on a severity scale score beginning with one (1) being a less severe punishment, to four (4), being most severe.

As described under the section Questionnaire Participants, the researcher began by giving the questionnaire to a middle school administrator, who answered the questionnaire and afterwards gave copies of the questionnaire to one of his teachers, her six students and two parents. The teacher then returned the completed questionnaires to the administrator along with their individual responses as well. At the end of the week, the researcher picked up the ten questionnaire results from the administrator. See Table 3.7 Questionnaire Attendance Policy Components Rating.

The Methods to Classify the Severity of District Attendance Policies

Ranking of severity.

The researcher used two different methods to rank the severity of each of the 21 components of the various district attendance policies in order to provide more than one way to identify an attendance policy's impact on school absence rates. As a result, the questionnaire participants provided the individual response scores of an attendance policy's components, so that the researcher could rank the attendance policies. Subsequently, the attendance policies were ranked in two different manners. The researcher's first approach was to add the responses, and secondly to choose the most severe attendance components and use their resulting scores to rank all attendance policies based upon their scored severity. Each method can be observed in Table 3:5 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating.

The first method used by the researcher involved finding the mean severity for each district. The researcher calculated the means for each district by taking into account the number of attendance policies which would be used within the study. In order to attain the mean severity score, the researcher used the averaged severity score from the first procedure for each item. The average was added for each of the 21 component areas that a particular district policy contained. It was noted that not all attendance policies contained twenty-one components, so each attendance policy was totaled and given a separate final severity score for each school district. Table 3.5 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating.

The second method involved identifying the six most severe components of the twenty-one component areas. The six most severe policies had a total component score ranging from 3.6 to 4.0. This was accomplished by including the six most severe punishments within an attendance policy, and then ranking that particular district's policy components in regard to all

thirty school attendance policies. After the total component scores were tallied, the researcher then added the six severest scores and received a ranked score for the district attendance policy from least severe to most severe. See Table 3.8 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range.

Table 3.8

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range

| 3.6 Rating | 3.6 | 3.8 | 3.9 | Parents | Child | Severity | Total | Severity |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| School | Rating | Rating | Rating | Jailed | Jailed | Count | Severity | Rank |
| Withdraw | \$1000.00 | Loss of | Loss of | 4.0 Rate | 4.0 Rate | Range | Score | |
| | Fines | Driver | custody | | | | | |
| | | License | | | | | | |
| | | Washington | | | | 1 | 3.8 | 1 |
| | | | | Hall | | 1 | 4.0 | 2.5 |
| | | | | Macon | | 1 | 4.0 | 2.5 |
| Ware | | Ware | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Marietta | | Marietta | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Cobb | | Cobb | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Madison | | Madison | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Mitchell | | Mitchell | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.20 |
| | | Tift | | Tift | | 2 | 7.8 | 6.50 |
| Valdosta | | Valdosta | | Valdosta | | 2 | 7.8 | 6.50 |
| Jenkins | | Jenkins | | Jenkins | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Fulton | | Fulton | | Fulton | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Bulloch | | Bulloch | | Bulloch | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Barrow | | Barrow | | Barrow | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Burke | | Burke | | Burke | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Atlanta | | Atlanta | | Atlanta | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| | | Columbia | Columbia | Columbia | | 3 | 11.7 | 10.33 |
| | | Chatham | Chatham | | Chatham | 3 | 11.7 | 10.33 |

Table 3.8

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range

| 3.6 Rating | 3.6 | 3.8 | 3.9 | Parents | Child | Severity | Total | Severity |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| School | Rating | Rating | Rating | Jailed | Jailed | Count | Severity | Rank |
| Withdraw | \$1000.00 | Loss of | Loss of | 4.0 Rate | 4.0 Rate | Range | Score | |
| | Fines | Driver | custody | | | | | |
| | | License | | | | | | |
| | | Washington | | | | 1 | 3.8 | 1 |
| | | | | Hall | | 1 | 4.0 | 2.5 |
| | | | | Macon | | 1 | 4.0 | 2.5 |
| Ware | | Ware | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Marietta | | Marietta | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Cobb | | Cobb | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Madison | | Madison | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.25 |
| Mitchell | | Mitchell | | | | 2 | 7.4 | 4.20 |
| | | Tift | | Tift | | 2 | 7.8 | 6.50 |
| Valdosta | | Valdosta | | Valdosta | | 2 | 7.8 | 6.50 |
| Jenkins | | Jenkins | | Jenkins | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Fulton | | Fulton | | Fulton | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Bulloch | | Bulloch | | Bulloch | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Barrow | | Barrow | | Barrow | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Burke | | Burke | | Burke | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| Atlanta | | Atlanta | | Atlanta | | 3 | 11.4 | 8.16 |
| | | Columbia | Columbia | Columbia | | 3 | 11.7 | 10.33 |
| | | Chatham | Chatham | | Chatham | 3 | 11.7 | 10.33 |
| | | Wayne | Wayne | Wayne | | 3 | 11.7 | 10.33 |
| | | Gwinnett | | Gwinnett | Gwinnett | 3 | 11.8 | 12.33 |

Table 3.8 continued

District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range

| 3.6 Rating | 3.6 | 3.8 | 3.9 | Parents | Child | Severity | Total | Severity |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| School | Rating | Rating | Rating | Jailed | Jailed | Count | Severity | Rank |
| Withdraw | \$1000.00 | Loss of | Loss of | 4.0 Rate | 4.0 Rate | Range | Score | |
| | Fines | Driver | custody | | | | | |
| | | License | | | | | | |
| | | McIntosh | | McIntosh | McIntosh | 3 | 11.8 | 12.33 |
| | | Richmond | | Richmond | Richmond | 3 | 11.8 | 12.33 |
| Walker | | Walker | Walker | Walker | | 4 | 15.3 | 14 |
| Bibb | | Bibb | | Bibb | Bibb | 4 | 15.4 | 15 |
| Clayton | Clayton | Clayton | Clayton | Clayton | Clayton | 6 | 22.9 | 16.5 |
| Wilkes | Wilkes | Wilkes | Wilkes | Wilkes | Wilkes | 6 | 22.9 | 16.5 |
| Henry | | No severity | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dekalb | | No severity | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Muscogee | | No severity | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Seminole | | No severity | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |

As noted within the second method, the most severe component items were identified and given a severity score. The items were (1) school withdrawal with a rating of 3.6, (2) fines over \$1,000.00 dollars with a rating of 3.6, (3) loss of driver's license with a rating of 3.8, (4) the jailing of a child with a rating of 4.0, (5) the jailing of the parents with a rating of 4.0, and (6) the losing of custody by parents with a rating of 3.9.

For example, one county would only have the loss of a driver's license within its district policy; therefore the resulting score would be 3.8. Another school district may have all six components within its attendance policy and the resulting score would be (3.6, 3.6, 3.8, 4.0, 4.0, 4.0), or a total of 23.0. The high resulting total score caused the attendance policy to be ranked

as severe when compared with the other thirty school districts. See Table 3:6 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range.

Since there were no studies located that provided up-to-date information about Georgia and their school district attendance policies which may have changed since the enactment of the NCLB act of 2001, the researcher's procedure to examine the severity by using the two different methods provided an opportunity to classify the thirty policies.

30 School District Attendance Policies Compared to State Recommendations

The state had six requirements for every school district to adopt in their attendance policy which was mandated by state law: (1) establishing a truancy policy at five absences (2) retrieving, or not issuing a student's driving license for lack of attendance, (3) alerting DFACS, the court juvenile system, and/or social worker to a student's attendance records, (4) allowing school districts to adopt and write their own attendance policies, (5) there must be an established attendance protocol committee, and lastly (6) parental notification must be given to all parents in the beginning stages of the student's attendance problems. District attendance policies were examined for compliance with these six requirements.

Analysis

The research question objective was to learn whether changes in absence rates corresponded with changes in attendance policies growing from NCLB legislation. The dependent variable was pre-NCLB and post- NCLB absence rates. In order to answer the three research questions, and explain how the data were analyzed, the researcher addressed each one independently with the associated retrieved data. The questions were:

1. What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?

The rates were placed in table formats, charts, and summations which were compared based upon each school district during the four academic years of the study (2003-2007). The percentiles of the absence rates of each school district were also retrieved and separated into two groups based upon whether or not rates were high or low.

The researcher also formed a table to show the school district based absence rates prior to, and subsequent to the passage of the NCLB act. See Table 3.1 School Districts Based on Second Indicator Rates. Another table was also developed which showed the standard deviations and means of their absence rates for each of the 30 chosen school districts. This table was beneficial to the study, because it allowed one to determine whether the absence rates differed from the school districts varied widely based on their absence rates. These calculations were based upon the middle school absence rates only. See Table 3.6 Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates.

2. What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia County which would be observed in this study?

The researcher retrieved each fundamental difference within the attendance policy and developed a summary list of twenty-one different components from within each districts' policy. Upon identifying the differences, the researcher used tables, charts, and a questionnaire based upon the components of the attendance policies. Two severity ranking methods were devised in order to deal with each fundamental difference within each district and address how the district policies compared to the Georgia state attendance policy. See Table 3.5 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating.

The researcher also developed a table which showed each of the twenty-one components of the 30 district policies along with their attendance rate data based upon their status as one of

the school districts with the lowest, or highest rates. This table allowed one to determine which policies were included by the school districts. See Table 3.1 School Districts Based on Second Indicator Rates and other appendices for each of the 30 school districts.

3. Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rates once school and district factors are taken into account?

Several regression analysis, t-tests and correlations were performed to answer research question three because the researcher needed to control the additional variables. The variables were directly associated with the thirty school districts, such as each district's absence rates, demographics, and free/reduced lunch rates. The regression analysis helped to control the other variables within the study and gave the researcher the needed comparisons, percentiles, and probable causes which may have resulted from the attendance policies and their changed absence rates since the enactment of the NCLB Act.

The regression model was performed to control for the five different variables. The correlated t-tests, which subsequently helped the researcher to find the standard deviations and means of the absence rates subsequent to the passage of the NCLB Act were also included in the study. The regression model was effective in helping the researcher answer the overarching question of the research, "Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and the subsequent changes in attendance policies?"

Summary

Chapter three described the research process designed to answer the three research questions posed in this study. Fifteen districts with the best improvements in student attendance were selected and contrasted with fifteen districts with the lowest student attendance for the two years prior to passage of NCLB and two years since passage. Within these 30 school districts,

attendance in the middle schools was the focus of data gathering. The Georgia Department of Education website was the source of these data. This process yielded districts with a wide range of characteristics.

The dependent variable was the post-NCLB policy absence rates for the middle schools in the districts selected since the passage of NCLB. The independent variables were the thirty district policies severity ratings, the middle school size, a school's status as Title I/non-Title I, pre-NCLB policy absence rates during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year, and the percent of free/reduced lunch recipients.

A questionnaire was developed from an analysis of the thirty district policies and administered to a principal, teacher, parents, and students for the purpose of establishing the severity of punishments found in the various district policies.

Two procedures for ranking the severity of the punishments were discussed concerning the district attendance policies. The data analysis section was implemented by using a variety of methods; such as calculated t-tests, finding of standard deviations, and defining district means and averages for each school district with their associated absence rates. The chosen regression model enabled the researcher an opportunity to proceed with the objective of the study by presenting an analysis of 30 local district initiatives to reduce absence rates subsequent to passage of the NCLB Act.

Using the regression model, Univariate Analysis of Variance, the between-subject factors resulted in a large F-value of 12.41 and a significance of .0001. When the researcher applied the fore mentioned results to the school districts that had any of the six severest components within their attendance policy, the effects were positive. The results were not only positive, but a significant difference affected any school district that used the severest

components. It was also noted that the 95% Confidence interval resulted in positive results as well.

The post-NCLB absence rates also showed significance with an r-value of .051 and the differences in the pre-post NCLB absence rates decreased. Pair wise comparisons indicated that any school district that used the severest of attendance policy components were likely to have increased their school district's absence rates subsequent to the passage of the NCLB Act.

See Table 3.6 Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to provide an analysis of local school district responses to absence rates after the implementation of the NCLB Act. This study examined the possible effects of school attendance policy changes on meeting AYP standards among Georgia middle schools. The chapter further explored the different attendance policies employed by school districts in order meet adequate yearly progress since the mandated No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The NCLB Act caused many states to revise their student absence rates in school systems and Georgia was no exception.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this research was, “Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and the subsequent changes in attendance policies?” The following sub-questions guided the over-arching research question.

1. What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?
2. What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia county that was observed in this study?
3. Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rate once school and district factors are taken into account?

Research Design

For this study, district attendance policies were classified in two ways in an attempt to learn how attendance policies correlate with school absence rates. First the severity of policies implemented with each district was considered, and secondly the number of severest policies implemented within each district was explored. By classifying the attendance policies in this manner, the fundamental differences could be identified individually. The researcher sought to determine whether severity appeared to influence each district's absence rate, and whether the changing of district attendance policies aided meeting, or not meeting, the second indicator criterion, attendance.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in order to answer each of the three research questions. In order to control variables within the study, a regression analysis was used because the study contained several covariates and one dependent variable. The dependent variable was Post-policy NCLB absence rates: the mean percentage of students in a school with 15 or more absences during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. The measure was school-specific and also produced a different mean post-policy absence rate for each school and district.

The five independent variables classified as covariates were:

- the district's attendance policy severity rating,
- the middle school's mean population size,
- the middle school's Title I /Non-Title I status,
- the mean socio-economic status (SES) level established by the percentage of students on free/reduced lunch,

- and the mean pre-NCLB policy absence rates during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

As noted above, the independent variable attendance policy severity rating had two classifications procedures that were used to rate districts according to their attendance policy severity. As a district-wide classification procedure, this meant each middle school within a given district received the district wide score for their policy severity. The first classification procedure dealt with the mean severity rating, and the second procedure was the count of severest policies.

- Mean Severity Rating: The mean policy severity ratings were used for each district. The mean was calculated based upon which attendance policies were implemented by the school district.

For example, if a district implemented 6 of the 21 policy components, the mean rating would be added then divided based on the inclusion of the six policy components. For example, a school district may have used the following components,

- intervention at five absences(severity rating =1.6),
- loss of a driver's license (severity rating =3.8),
- parental notification (severity rating =1.4),
- and a monetary fine (severity rating =2.5).

Those components would yield a total component score of 9.3. The 9.3 component score would then be divided by the total number of components used within the attendance policy, which was four. The answer from this division would be the mean severity rating score of 2.35. See Table 3.8 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating for further information and district attendance policy mean severity ratings.

- Count of Severest Policies. There were 21 attendance policy components found within the 30 district attendance policies. Of the 21 policy components found within the sample, the six rated most severe by the participants included components 9, 11, 17, 19, 20, and 21.

The count of severest policies was simply the number of the six severest policies implemented within a given district. See Table 3.8 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating for further comparisons. For example, a school district may have used four of the six severest attendance components,

- Component 20: Loss of custody by parents (severity rating =3.9),
- Component 9 : Loss of a driver’s license (severity rating =3.8),
- Component 19: Parents Jailed (severity rating =4.1),
- Component 11: School Withdrawal (severity rating =3.6).

The count severity score for this district would be four. A district was given a zero (0) score if no severity component was used, whereas a six would have signified that all six components were used within the district. See Table 3.8 District Attendance Policy Severity Rating 0-6 Range.

Research Question 1:

What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act? In an effort to effectively answer the overarching research question, “Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and the subsequent changes in attendance policies,” school attendance was targeted. As Georgia’s second indicator, the state mandated that the 2004-2005 academic school year would be the beginning of the accountability mandate.

With the mandate as a guide, the researcher chose the absence rates for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years as pre-NCLB absence rates and the succeeding school years, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 as the post-NCLB absence rates. The researcher also used correlated samples t-tests to determine whether pre-and post-NCLB absence rates differed. Pre-post NCLB absence rates of the 30 School Districts were presented in Table 4.1 and the correlated samples t-test results are reported in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1

District Mean-Pre-Post NCLB with Six Severest Policy Components

| School District | Pre-NCLB Absence Rates | Post-NCLB Absence Rates | Driver's License | School Withdrawal | Jail Parent | Jail Child | \$1,000 Dollar fine | Loss of Custody |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Atlanta | 13.06 | 6.94 | x | x | x | | | |
| Barrow | 16.03 | 10.85 | x | x | x | | | |
| Bibb | 19.34 | 15.71 | x | x | x | x | | |
| Bulloch | 15.9 | 15.58 | x | x | x | | | |
| Burke | 8.55 | 7.25 | x | x | x | | | |
| Chatham | 18.18 | 13.7 | x | | | x | | x |
| Clayton | 14.19 | 12.1 | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Cobb | 10.25 | 8.00 | x | x | | | | |
| Columbia | 10.10 | 6.96 | x | | x | | | x |
| Dekalb | 12.02 | 11.23 | | | | | | |
| Fulton | 13.44 | 7.38 | x | x | x | | | |
| Gwinnett | 8.71 | 6.13 | x | | x | x | | |
| Hall | 9.59 | 8.3 | | | x | | | |

Table 4.1

District Mean-Pre-Post NCLB with Six Severest Policy Components

| School District | Pre-NCLB Absence Rates | Post-NCLB Absence Rates | Driver's License | School Withdrawal | Jail Parent | Jail Child | \$1,000 Dollar fine | Loss of Custody |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Henry | 12.6 | 9.01 | | | | | | |
| Jenkins | 22.0 | 12.4 | x | x | x | | | |
| Macon | 12.05 | 12.8 | x | | | x | | |
| Madison | 14.3 | 15.25 | x | x | | | | |
| Marrietta | 11.17 | 10.28 | x | x | | | | |
| McIntosh | 14.55 | 12.75 | | | | | | |
| Mitchell | 7.7 | 11.85 | x | x | | | | |
| Muscogee | 18.04 | 14.28 | | | | | | |
| Richmond | 15.2 | 12.1 | x | | x | x | | |
| Seminole | 17 | 10.55 | | | | | | |
| Tift | 14.6 | 10.7 | x | | x | | | |
| Valdosta | 14.6 | 9.2 | x | | x | | | |
| Walker | 24.08 | 9.33 | x | | | | x | |
| Washington | 10.5 | 8.05 | x | | | | | |
| Ware | 12.2 | 8.33 | x | x | | | | |
| Wayne | 11.33 | 6.8 | x | | x | | | x |
| Wilkes | 3.25 | 5.1 | x | x | x | x | x | x |

To address research question, Table 4.1, was included to show the 30 districts with their pre-NCLB policy absence rate and their post-NCLB absence rate. Since absence rates were based upon school-specific information, the researcher had to find the

mean absence rates across all middle schools within the district. See Table 3.6 Pre-Post NCLB Mean Absence Rates of the 30 School Districts.

As shown in Table 4.2, the overall pre-NCLB absence rate mean of the 30 school districts was 12.77% and the post-NCLB district absence rate was 9.71%.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics and t-test results for Mean Absences Across Districts by Policy

Change Status

| Outcome | Pre-NCLB Absence | | Post-NCLB Absence | | n | 95% CI for Mean Difference | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|-----|----------------------------|------|--------|-----|
| | <u>Change</u> M | SD | <u>Change</u> M | SD | | r | t | df | |
| Mean Abs. | 12.77 | 6.40 | 9.71 | 5.04 | 189 | 2.49,3.63 | 0.78 | 10.54* | 188 |

*p<.05

The highest district absence rate was 29.5% from Jenkins County school district during the 2003-2004 academic school year. The correlated samples t-test shows that the mean absence rate for school districts dropped during the targeted years of the study, and this decline was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Only four school districts did not have a decrease in their absence rates during the study, Mitchell, Madison, Macon, and Wilkes County.

Research Question 2:

What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia county that was observed in this study? The question addressed the 21 components within the 30 attendance policies with a descriptive table which outlined each district policy. See Table 3.8 District Attendance Policy Components Severity Rating. The counties differed in several ways:

- their application and adoption of the state mandated attendance policy requirements,
- the mean average of each school district after the components were divided by the total number of components,
- the severity of the attendance policies by using any of the six severest components.

The fundamental differences were based upon gathering the data from the 30 districts. It was evident that some districts did not employ all of the 21 components, but did include the severest aspects of the twenty-one components in order to deter high absence rates. District examples included, Wilkes and Clayton Counties, which were the only two counties that used all six of the severest attendance policy components (See Table 4.1 District Mean-Pre-Post NCLB with Six Severest Policy Components).

Data also indicated that 25 of the districts used at least one of the severely rated attendance policy components. The severity component that was used by more counties than any other was the revoking of a student's driver's license because of attendance policy violations. The other most used severity component was school withdrawal; fourteen school districts decided this would decrease their absence rates.

Of most importance, the researcher noticed that some districts did not use all of the state mandated attendance policy components in their district's creation of its own policy. Overall, 18 school districts did not use at least one of the state mandated components, but all districts used the state mandated component, "the use of an attendance protocol committee to deter high absence rates for their district." Further discussion of the fundamental differences of the 30 district attendance policies can be found in Table 4.1 District Mean-Pre-Post NCLB with Six Severest Policy Components and within the appendices of this dissertation.

Research Question 3:

Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post NCLB-policy absence rates once school and district factors were taken into account? The researcher was able to address this with regression analysis. Correlations and descriptive statistics for the variables studied are reported in Table 4.3_Correlation Matrix of Post-NCLB Absence Rate Variables.

Table 4.3

Correlation Matrix of Post-NCLB Absence Rate Variables

| | DV | IV | IV | IV | IV | IV | IV |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | Post-NCLB Absence Rate | Pre-NCLB Absence Rate | Attend. Policy Mean | Count of six severity | School Size Mean | Title I School Status | SES Free Lunch |
| Post-NCLB Absence Rate | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| Pre-NCLB Absence Rate | 0.782* | 1.00 | | | | | |
| Attendance Policy Mean | -0.15 | -0.08 | 1.00 | | | | |
| Count of six severity | -0.05 | 0.02 | 0.782* | 1.00 | | | |
| School Size Mean | -0.12 | -0.20 | -0.02 | -0.08 | 1.00 | | |
| Title I School Status | 0.28* | 0.31* | 0.07 | 0.16 | -0.23 | 1.00 | |
| SES Free Lunch | 0.45* | 0.48* | -0.06 | 0.08 | -0.19 | 0.75* | 1.00 |
| Mean | 9.71 | 12.77 | 2.40 | 2.41 | 494.58 | 0.57 | 55.91 |
| Standard Deviation | 5.04 | 6.40 | 0.28 | 1.55 | 478.54 | 0.50 | 26.67 |
| Minimum Value | 0.55 | 0.45 | 1.59 | 0.00 | 38.75 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Maximum Value | 35.65 | 45.30 | 2.71 | 6.00 | 2994.25 | 0.50 | 97.61 |

* $p < .05$; $n = 189$ middle schools

The matrix revealed that there were several variables that were statistically significant and/or correlated with each other. The results were as follows:

- **Attendance policy mean** and post-NCLB absence rates were correlated slightly and negatively. The results were also not statistically significant between each other. This result shows that attendance policy mean scores show that policy ratings appear to be unrelated to post-absence rates. Therefore the mean score of an attendance policy does not necessarily correlate with absence rates.
- **Count of severity** and post-NCLB absence rates correlate negatively, although weakly and the correlation is not statistically significant. This result shows that districts with high count of severity scores tend to not have decreased their post-absence rates. Therefore the severity score of an attendance policy does not necessarily correlate with absence rates.
- **Pre-NCLB absence rates** and post-NCLB absence rates display a strong positive correlation. This shows that districts with high absence rates prior to policy changes tend to have high absence rates post-NCLB policy changes. Similarly, those with low pre-NCLB absence rates tend to have low post-NCLB absence rates.
- **School Size** and post-NCLB absence rates correlate negatively, although weakly and the correlation is not statistically significant. This result shows that districts with large middle schools did not necessarily decrease their post-absence rates.
- **SES/Free Lunch ratio** and post-NCLB absence rates correlate positively and moderately strong. This result shows that schools that have high SES/Free Lunch Ratios tend to also have high post- NCLB absence rates.

- **Title I status** and post-NCLB absence rates are correlated slightly with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.28. This variable is not only statistically significant, but indicates that Title I schools tend to have higher absence rates during the post-NCLB years of the study.
- **Attendance policy mean** and the count of severity correlation is a strong, positive, and statistically significant. This result shows that districts with high attendance policy mean scores tend to also have high count of six severity scores as well.
- **Title I status** and pre-NCLB absence rates correlation is a moderately positive and statistically significant result. The correlation shows that those schools that have Title I status tend to also have high pre-NCLB absence rates.

The final analysis to be used to answer Research Question 3 was regression analysis. Two regression analyses were used; one for mean severity ratings, as a predictor, and the other for count of severity rating as a predictor, as well. Results are presented in Table 4.4 Regression of Post-policy Abs. Rates on Mean Severity Rating and District Factors and Table 4.5 Regression of Post-policy Abs. Rates on Count of Six Severity and District Factors.

The data also revealed that the negative results are almost significant with the evidence of the p-value. In table 4.5 the count of severity variable was not related to post-NCLB absence rates, and was not a predictor of post absence rates. The only predictor of post-NCLB absence rates was the variable pre-NCLB absence rates.

Table 4.4

Regression of Post-policy Abs. Rates on Mean Severity Rating and District Factors

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | t | p-value | 95% Confidence Interval for B | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| | B | Std. Error | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| (Constant) | 4.507 | 2.217 | 2.033* | .043 | .133 | 8.880 |
| IV_PRE_ABSENCE_RATE | .577 | .041 | 14.109* | .000 | .496 | .657 |
| V_POLICY_MEAN | -1.560 | .824 | -1.892 | .060 | -3.186 | .067 |
| IV_SCH_SIZE_MEAN | .000 | .000 | .876 | .382 | -.001 | .001 |
| IV_TITLE1_2007 | -.196 | .702 | -.278 | .781 | -1.581 | 1.190 |
| IV_FREE_MEAN_SES | .023 | .014 | 1.623 | .106 | -.005 | .050 |

Note. $R^2 = 0.63$, adj. $R^2 = 0.62$, $F = 62.01^*$, $df = 5,183$; $n = 189$.

* $p < .05$

Table 4.5

Regression of Post-policy Abs. Rates on Count of Six Severity and District Factors

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | t | p-value | 95% Confidence Interval for B | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| | B | Std. Error | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| (Constant) | 1.232 | .929 | 1.326 | .187 | -.601 | 3.065 |
| IV_PRE_ABSENCE_RATE | .579 | .041 | 14.158* | .000 | .499 | .660 |
| IV_COUNT_6_SEVEREST | -.238 | .149 | -1.598 | .112 | -.532 | .056 |
| IV_SCH_SIZE_MEAN | .000 | .000 | .815 | .416 | -.001 | .001 |
| IV_TITLE1_2007 | -.240 | .703 | -.342 | .733 | -1.628 | 1.147 |
| IV_FREE_MEAN_SES | .025 | .014 | 1.791 | .075 | -.003 | .052 |

Note. $R^2 = 0.63$, adj. $R^2 = 0.62$, $F = 61.47^*$, $df = 5,183$; $n = 189$.

* $p < .05$

Table 4.4 shows that only pre-NCLB absence rates predict post-NCLB absence rates. The attendance policy mean severity variable shows a negative relationship, but is not significant at the .05 level of significance. This result does indicate that a marginal prediction may exist in the area of mean severity, but not count of severity.

Summary

Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rates once school and district factors are taken into account? The regression analyses revealed a two-fold answer. Pre-NCLB absence rates predicted the outcome expected by the researcher, but mean severity had only marginal results. Furthermore it became evident through the analysis because some of the independent variable results were negative, and not supportive of possible predictions of post-NCLB absence rates based upon school and district factors.

As a predictor of post-NCLB absence rates, pre-NCLB absence rates were significant at the .05 level of significance. Since pre-NCLB absence rates was the only variable that could predict decreased post-NCLB absence rates for school districts, the next focus would be entirely based on the degree of relationship within the correlation matrix. The results of correlations ranged from negative to strong relationships when compared to the dependent variable.

The correlation matrix described the degree of relationship between the five independent variables, and the dependent variable. Some of the results were negative, yet statistically significant within the study. There were six positive correlations that were statistically significant with post-NCLB absence rates and the other variables.

Another observation of importance was that the correlation matrix had three negative correlations between post-NCLB absence rates; the attendance policy mean, count of six severity, and school size. These slight negative correlations show that post-NCLB absence rates

may have been related, but these school districts also had high mean severity scores, count of six severity scores, or large school sizes.

Lastly, the regression analysis table also revealed that only one of the district factors was important in determining the answer to research question 3, pre-NCLB absence rates. However, the mean severity of an attendance policy was also marginally related to the prediction of post-NCLB absence rates. The results helped the researcher to conclude that not all district factors need to be taken into account, as good predictors of the outcome of the district's post-NCLB absence rates.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the efforts made by local Georgia school districts to reduce absence rates after the implementation of the NCLB Act by changing their attendance policies. The quantitative method of analysis, along with the descriptive statistic, table and charts of the 30 school districts provided the best method needed to answer the research questions.

The study fulfilled a void in the educational literature and answered whether or not the NCLB attendance requirements and the subsequent changes in attendance policies were effective in reducing absence rates. A discussion of those findings was presented in Chapter five.

Summary

NCLB identified absence rates as one factor in mandated local, state and national accountability standards. How a school district handled and controlled absences within their schools would be considered as one basis of their success, or failure during their academic school year. State and local regulators concur that research has proven that attendance in school is an important factor in learning and improving student achievement scores (Rosa, 2005).

The overarching question was, “Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and compulsory attendance policies?” In addition three sub-questions also guided the study.

1. What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?
2. What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from

each Georgia County that was observed in this study?

3. Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rates once school and district factors are taken into account?

These data enabled the researcher to establish the severity of policies. The following steps were used to answer the research questions. The researcher:

- identified the school districts based upon their absence rates reported as their second indicator data,
- retrieved each district's attendance policy and noted similarities within each district's policy,
- developed a questionnaire with 21 different attendance policies that were drawn from the policies of the 30 participating districts,
- distributed the questionnaires to a middle school administrator who in turn distributed them to selected teachers, their students, and their parents,
- retrieved the questionnaire results from the middle school students, based on the questionnaire results, determined severity of each of the 21 district attendance policies,
- identified the six most severe components,
- retrieved school size data for each middle school,
- retrieved Title I Status for each middle school,
- retrieved absence rates for four consecutive school years (2003-2007),
- determined pre-NCLB absence rates mean for each school district,
- determined post-NCLB absence rates mean for each school district,
- performed regression analysis on retrieved data,

- performed correlation and prediction analysis on retrieved data,
- answered Research Question 1 concerning absence rates,
- answered Research Question 2 concerning differences within policies,
- answered Research Question 3 concerning correlations, predictions of post - NCLB policy absence rates with control factors included,
- statistically answered the overarching question concerning absence rates and their relationship to the NCLB act and compulsory district attendance policies.

Discussion of Research Findings

As forementioned, the purpose of the study was to statistically determine whether or not the implementation of post-NCLB attendance policies have affected school district absence rates. The quantitative data provided an answer to whether or not any significant differences existed among the dependent variable, absence rates, and the five independent variables, pre-absence rates, school size, SES/free and reduced lunch data, and the severity of a district's attendance policy.

The data provided an answer as to whether or not an impact was made during the four years with regard to the severity of the attendance policies of the districts. The data displayed whether or not there were any overall benefits to districts that enforced more severe or less severe policies. It also identified which attendance policies were most effective in reducing absence rates.

According to the literature, Cox (2002) stated that the variable of attendance was a viable measure of potential classroom success and it was time to recognize the relationship between daily school attendance, student performance, graduation rates, and classroom

teaching. The end result was that there was a statistically significant relationship which was readily noticed among certain variables.

Overarching Research Question

Have absence rates differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and compulsory attendance policies?"

The study investigated the efforts made by selected Georgia school districts to satisfy the standards set by the national legislative act to meet adequate yearly progress in the area of attendance, as well as to determine whether or not any significant differences might have resulted. The analysis of local district initiatives to decrease student absence rates subsequent to the passage of the NCLB Act has revealed that an attendance policy does and can effect whether or not a child is left behind.

According to the data findings, absence rates have differed since the implementation of the NCLB Act and compulsory attendance policies. The execution and adoption by state and local agencies of new attendance policies was related to a change. Within a four year period, the study revealed that in the 30 school districts, absence rates have made at least a 3% decrease overall, and as much as a 7% decrease in some school districts.

Research Sub-question #1

What were the absence rates of students prior to and subsequent to enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act?

The absence rates prior to and subsequent to the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act were significantly different. The pre-NCLB absence mean rate during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic school year was 12.77% and the post NCLB absence rate mean was 9.71% for all school districts. These results showed that among the districts, the absence

rates dropped significantly ($p < .001$) subsequent to the enactment. Sub-questions were developed in order to learn what other district factors may have contributed to this significant change in absence rates.

Research Sub-question #2

What were the fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia County that was observed in this study?

The fundamental differences between the attendance policies from each Georgia County were related to the relative severity. With regard to the Georgia state mandated attendance policy, an attendance policy's mean severity was a key factor in decreasing post-NCLB absence rates. There were 21 components from the attendance policies of the 30 school districts, and the only three components that all school districts implemented within their policies were components 10, 14, and 18. See Table 3.6 for comparison purposes.

The prevalent components were parent notification, an attendance protocol committee, and the inclusion of DFACS/Social Services. Being that there were six mandated state components, the other three mandated components which could have been used by all school districts were 1) truancy at 5 absences, 2) loss of the student's driver's license, and 3) local school attendance policy adoptions.

The fundamental differences found within the attendance policies of the 30 districts which were used by more counties than others were components 4, 10, 14, and 18. The establishment of truancy within the district of any student who had missed school at least five times, the inclusion of the DFACS/Social Service, and judges, parental notification of the student's excessive absences, and the organization of an established attendance protocol committee were the most emphasized components of the 30 districts within the study.

The least utilized attendance policy components were 7, 8, 17, and 20. Within the study in school suspension, home suspension, monetary fines over \$1000.00 dollars, and parents losing custody of their children, because of their absences during the school year were least included within the 30 district attendance policies.

The components of severity which were used by more school districts than others were 9, 11, and 19. The 30 school districts preferred implementing the revoking of a student's driver's license; school withdrawal and incarcerating the parent if a student did not abide by the district's attendance policy. See Appendix for the fundamental differences of the 30 school district attendance policies.

Another fundamental difference that existed in the attendance policies were discussed in the appendix and it was noted that not all of the 30 school districts included some of the state mandated attendance policy regulations. In relation to this study, researchers revealed that in order to successfully implement a new attendance policy, one needed to consider a five factor solution; communication with parents, truancy prevention, record keeping, enforcing the new attendance policy and school and parental support of students who successfully heeded to the policy (Rosa, 2003).

The state of Georgia included all five factors within the state attendance policy, and also added others of severity. The state only required six components that had to be placed in each school district's attendance policy;

1. parent notification,
2. an attendance protocol committee,
3. establishment of truancy at 5 absences,
4. local per school policy ownership,

5. inclusion of DFACs personnel, judges and social services if attendance problems continued,
6. the loss of the student's driver's license.

The researcher also observed that one of the six state components was also part of the six severest components, the loss of the student's driver's license.

Further discussion of each of the 30 school districts and the fundamental differences was discussed in the Appendix individually describing each school district. The appendix also included a table that gave descriptive statistics, and data which were related to the state required components in comparison to the district's attendance policy.

Research Sub-question #3

Does severity of attendance policy correlate with, and predict, post-policy absence rates once school and district factors are taken into account?

The severity of the attendance policy did correlate with and predict post NCLB policy absence rates once school and district factors were taken into account. Two independent variables caused a significant difference, pre-NCLB absence rates, and attendance policy mean severity. The data revealed that there was at least a 63% likely chance that each of the independent variables was somehow correlated with the dependent variable, post-NCLB policy absence rates.

When the district factors, pre- NCLB absence rates, Title I Status, count of severity within an attendance policy, school size, and SES/Free Lunch ratios were used within the correlation matrix, a significant difference existed. For example, the independent variable pre-NCLB absence rates affected the dependent variable. This variable demonstrated quantitatively that the results from the regression model were not only highly correlated with each other, but

also a reliable predictor of future absence rates in the state of Georgia as pertaining to district absence rates.

The second independent variable was twofold, mean severity and count of severity. Neither of the two predicted the outcome of the dependent variable, but the mean severity demonstrated marginal evidence that the post-NCLB absence rates did decrease as a result of the study's analysis. The impact of both components would suggest the need for further research. All six of the severest components were not needed in order to effect change, but according to the research, if the districts included any of the mandated components (i.e. loss of driver's license) they would aid each district in meeting AYP second indicator goals at least marginally.

The third variable school size was also not significant. It was more correlated than any of the other variables, but not a predictor of post-NCLB absence rates. The study revealed that a correlation existed between larger schools, and higher absence rates. This result would cause any school district to search for alternative ways to deter high absence rates.

The fourth variable, Title I status was the second highest correlated variable to post-NCLB absence rates. If the school was classified as a Title I school within the district, it was also an indicator of whether or not high absence rates existed during the four years of the study. However, as one of the district factors, the regression analysis revealed that this variable did not predict post-policy absence rates.

SES/Free Lunch ratio was highly correlated to the predictor variable, but was not a predictor of post-NCLB absence rates. Nevertheless this variable did indicate the probability that high absence rates existed within the school district with high SES ratios. This variable

along with other district factors would need further research to ascertain how much it predicts other attendance policy violations.

According to the literature, Davis (2003) stated that serious consequences have resulted from at-risk population who have high absence rates because of their demographical information. Unexcused school absence has become a major topic of accountability and standards research over the last decade. High dropout rates, graduation rates and low achievement test scores have made increasingly high rates of absences the needed target of research. The latter results from Davis' study were similar to the findings in this analysis of student absence rates in the 30 school districts.

The retrieval of the data also indicated that even though at least 50% of the districts had Title I status, and free/reduced lunch data was over 50% there was a reduction in the absence rates not considering the other factors involved. In several districts, the absence rates dropped at least 5% during the four years of the study; thereby denoting the significant changes within each individual district. Further discussion of each of the other independent variables and their association with the 30 school district attendance policies can be found in the Attendance Policy Appendix.

Analysis of Research Findings

The findings showed that there was a decrease in post-NCLB absence rates after Georgia school districts were mandated to change their attendance policies to meet state regulations. The study found that attendance policies and the efforts made by state and local leaders could very well determine whether or not local district initiatives to reduce student absence rates subsequent to passage of the NCLB Act actually were successful or not.

The analysis results of the study were three-fold:

- Absence rates did decrease after the attendance policy changes.
- Districts showed a wide variety of attendance policies, some components were popular among the districts, and some of the components were rarely used at all.
- Severity of attendance policies may, or may not be related to absence rates.

Stricter attendance policies are not related in this study to the decrease of post absence rates, but there is marginal evidence that mean severity of attendance policies may play some role in the observed decrease in absence rates.

In review of the literature, Davis (2003) stated that serious consequences have resulted from high absence rates. They have contributed to dropout rates, graduation rates and low achievement test scores. Unexcused school absence rates subsequent to the adoption of different types of attendance policies have attracted little empirically oriented research, especially with respect to the effect of severity. This study depicted descriptively that the study's middle school populations which were identified by the other independent variables were directly affected by the district's rates of absences.

In response to the NCLB act specifically established the six forementioned state attendance policy components as part of the required attendance law, under the auspices of "best practices." Within this study, Georgia's attempt to improve attendance through the mandatory changes in their school district attendance policies revealed that it was not just a need for implementing "best practices" within a district, but a needed component in meeting the second indicator of AYP. The study presented the needed data to identify the requirements that all districts need to implement. According to the results of the study the following conditions should be in every attendance policy in order to meet "best practices."

- the establishment of a truancy policy at five absences
- the retrieval, or denial of an issued student's driving license for lack of attendance,
- the alert of the DFACS, the court juvenile system, and/or social workers to observe a student's attendance records, and violations
- the state allowance of school districts to adopt and write their own attendance policies,
- the establishment of an attendance protocol committee,
- the certified notification of parents/guardians at the beginning stages of the student's attendance problems.

Compliance of the six state attendance policy requirements should be examined for its district and schools inclusion by educational policy makers, state officials, board members, superintendents, and all those who deem the NCLB act as law, and not a suggestion.

Implications

The literature review revealed that there was little empirical research in the area of attendance policies and decreasing student absence rates. However based on the findings of this study, there are implications which should be heeded to for principals, policy-makers, school districts, and classroom teachers. The aforementioned stakeholders are in a position to make a change in their absence rates among the students within their local districts, by being in compliance with six state mandated attendance policy requirements. The change in absence rates can be in the form of a local initiative which should be directed at meeting state mandated regulations that are aimed at the second indicator of the NCLB Act, attendance.

Everyone must be held accountable. As LEAs, the school districts must adopt an attendance policy on the basis of its pre-absence rates and mean severity with consistency, and fervor among all those who are involved with educating the student. States must

insure that school districts are adopting their mandated plans of improvement. In addition, there must be room within the state mandated policies for local school districts to make decisions which best fit their districts' mission to reduce absence rates. However, this freedom to venture away from the state's mandate should not be taken advantage of by local school districts that do not base their decisions upon researched techniques.

School boards must adopt attendance policies that incorporate all of the six state required components, because of the marginal mean severity results found within this study. Georgia's six requirements for every school district need to be adopted by all school districts and their allegiant middle schools. Since the adoption was a mandate to every district's attendance policy; there should be no room for absence of the six components.

The study revealed that it was hypothetically more than just likely that the new state initiatives made a significant difference within the 30 school districts. The reduction of absence rates within several school districts allowed the data to reflect the achieving of the NCLB second indicator goal. School boards should adopt the attendance policy components which have been proven by research to have impacted absence rate reduction.

- Community agencies, social services, judges, and the Department of Family and Children Services must take an active part in the school system's implementation of the attendance policy. Attendance policy adherence must be a collaborative effort with these agents, so that their duties are expected and incorporated as part of the student's school attendance policy.
- Parents must be aware that it is their responsibility to make sure that their children are educated. Since everyone is held accountable, parents must

support the attendance policy of the school district. Parent notification should not be taken for granted; parents must do their part to make education primary.

- Students must realize that attendance is required. Privileges will be lost, rewards will be few, and their future is at stake. They must realize that their state, school district, principals, teachers, parents, as well as they will be held accountable for their absence rates.

Recommendations

Further research is needed to address the racial and ethnic data which may have been a determining factor in the changes within local district initiatives that addressed why absence rates were higher among certain groups of students than other ethnic groups. A study would be needed to differentiate the need to pursue the best practices, from a demographical perspective as well the from the law's perspective. This study has yielded a wealth of data and accountability information.

NCLB has mandated so many types of collection from school districts that the retrieval of vital data was easily accessible, and yet there is still a greater need to expand this research. Further study needs to examine two areas. Vitrally important to continued research would be to examine the need to involve community agencies, such as social services earlier in the student's attendance issues in order to resolve them before the problem begins to exist. Secondly, research needs to examine how to deter attendance violations of certain ethnic groups, and their likelihood to violate the attendance law.

Future investigations should be designed to include more participants, more school districts, different school districts than the thirty included in this study and a concentration of a variety of race and gender needs to be included. This study also needs to be replicated in

unlimited geographical areas and states across the nation. Schools need to implement changes that are research based and effectively promote education. Education happens within the classroom, and if the child is absent, then education has ceased for that day (Cox, 2002).

Dissemination

The results of this research will interest diverse educational audiences and stakeholders. The findings from this study will be offered to investigators through electronic dissertation files, and educational publishers. Moreover, the findings may be reported in faculty meetings, state offices, principals, and to school boards. Educators may find a wealth of informational data, from the reviews in the Attendance Policy Appendix. Within this particular appendix, each of the 30 school districts were separated based upon each of the independent variables; Title I status, school size, pre-absence mean, post-absence mean, free lunch data, SES and the count of severity.

This study will also aid in the efforts to reform and improve the performance of schools and reduce absence rates throughout the state of Georgia and the nation. This study will offer some school districts motivation and encouragement to see that their implementation of new attendance policies was already the best choice. Whereas, other school districts will recognize that changes need to be made within their attendance policies.

Concluding Thoughts

My concluding thoughts concerning this study which sought to investigate the absence rates and their impact since the implementation of the NCLB Act were disconcerting. Accountability has caused many school districts to seek for remedies and initiatives that could change their outcomes. Accountability has also caused, and is continuing to cause major decisions to be made that may force many educational stakeholders to act without options.

The remedy for these future major decisions should be based on research, not opinion based majority voting by educational leaders and policy makers.

This study is an option; an option to a missing link, and a void in educational literature. It is my belief that this study will assist and arouse other researchers to create similar studies that will become prescribed antidotes for school districts that have come to realize that their absence rates are part of the problem. It is time to stop using the same method of problem solving for the masses. Prescribing the same method for all school districts has become futile, because no county or school district contains the same set of problems, or variables.

A mixed method of problem solving for school districts across the nation is needed in order to determine the right remedy for the right results. The decision to implement new educational district initiatives should be based on informed decisions based on statistical data. Subsequently, it is time to compare, contrast, and correlate research, in order to give a detailed prediction and analysis of local school district initiatives that can reduce student absence rates. This type of study can further research and identify other weaknesses that might exist and help other school districts meet not only the second indicator variable, but maybe exceed in other areas as well.

Weakness in the state of Georgia was in the form of high absence rates, therefore the second indicator became a primary subject of debate by educational stakeholders. From this study, we have seen quantitative evidence that pre-absence rates and the mean severity of a school district attendance policy can create progress and strength in reducing the district's absence rates.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Henry County Attendance Policy

Henry County's attendance policies mean score was 1.987. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the state regulatory attendance policy. As for mentioned, the state required six essential factors of every school district's attendance policy, the definition of truancy, loss of driver license for teens, corroboration with law enforcement faculties, parental notification, local school ownership and authority, and lastly the establishment of an attendance protocol committee. Henry County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except two. Henry County did not mention in its policy the loss of a driver license for all teens within the driving age and local policy administration and creation of its own attendance policy within the school.

Henry County had 8 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 31,976. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 10,322. The economically disadvantaged made up 32.0% of their middle school population. None of Henry County schools had Title I status. The names of the Schools were Henry Middle, Austin Road, Dutch town, Eagles Landing, Luella, Ola, Stockbridge, and Union Grove.

Results indicated that in Henry County's schools, Union Grove and Austin Road met AYP all four years, Luella Middle has never met AYP status, Eagle Landings and Henry County Middle met AYP every year except in 2005, Dutch town Middle met AYP in 2007 and 2006, while not reaching it in 2005, and Stockbridge met AYP only in 2006. Lastly, Ola Middle had only been in existence for one academic school year and the reported data stated that this school did not meet AYP since its existence.

During its 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. As a county which possessed no Title I schools, the low ranked attendance policy did fulfill the minimal, yet it did not fulfill two of the six required elements of the state policy. Henry County did not fulfill:

- the loss of driver license for all teens with driving age
- local adoption per school of administering/creating an attendance policy which would be aligned with state policy standards.

Henry County's attendance policy revealed that there were eight important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention method to students before one reaches 5 absences
- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- The definition of truancy within its attendance policy
- An intervention plan from the school/administrative staff
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Henry County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Henry County score: 1.987 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,5,10,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 9,16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |
| **Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation | | |

APPENDIX B

Dekalb County Attendance Policy

Dekalb County's attendance policy mean score was 1.99. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. DeKalb County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Dekalb did not mention in its policy, the loss of a driver's license to all truant teenager drivers.

Dekalb County had 21 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 340,838. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 67,445. The economically disadvantaged made up 41.0% of their middle school population. The twenty-one middle schools were named Tucker, Lithonia, Avondale, Cedar Grove, Chamblee, Chapel Hill, Redan, McNair, Mary Bethune, Lithonia Magnet, Miller, Peachtree, Columbia, Freedom, Henderson, Champion, Stone Mountain, Stephenson, Shamrock, Sequoia, and Salem Middle.

In 2007, thirteen schools claimed Title I status, in 2006, twelve schools, in 2005, there were five that claimed this status, and lastly in 2004, there were thirteen. In all, over 50% of Dekalb County's schools have Title I status. Data indicated that the highest absence rates are attributed to the economically disadvantaged population. This identified population highest rate of absences happened at all schools during 2004-2007, yet the data indicates their absence rate has not been significantly different from the total population's retrieved data. Dekalb County does not fulfill state's policy by revoking a student's driver's license as a deterrent to high absences; it does employ other key elements within its district policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- In School Suspension to repeat offenders
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A rewards incentive program for those who heed to the policy
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

The 10 areas that rationalize Dekalb County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Dekalb County score: 1.99 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,7,10,14,15,16,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 9 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX C

Muscogee County Attendance Policy

Muscogee County's attendance policy mean score was 2.00. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the state regulatory attendance policy. As for mentioned, the state required six essential factors of every school district's attendance policy, the definition of truancy, loss of driver license for teens, corroboration with law enforcement faculties, parental notification, local school ownership and authority, and lastly the establishment of an attendance protocol committee. Muscogee County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except two. Muscogee did not mention in its policy the loss of a driver license for all teens within the driving age and local policy administration, creation of an attendance policy within the school.

Muscogee County had 12 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 29,589. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 18,027. The economically disadvantaged made up 60.9% of their middle school population. The twelve schools were Arnold Middle, Baker Middle, Blackmon, Double Churches Middle, Early Middle, East Columbus Middle, Marsh Middle, Eddy Middle, Midland Middle, Richard Middle, Fort Middle, and Rothschild Middle.

Five schools were classified as Title I during the four years. Within these five Title I schools, there was a total of 11,683 students with 80.4% of them classified as economically disadvantaged. Marshall made AYP on in 2007 after posting its lowest attendance rate in 4 years. Marshall's pre-NCLB absence rates were 38.9% and dropped to 26.9% by the end of the study in 2007. This was a 12% decrease in absence rates. The other two schools, Eddy Middle and Baker Middle were different in their school AYP reports. Eddy and Baker have never met AYP state requirements. Both schools did as mentioned earlier, have a high economically disadvantaged population, but the absences were among the total student population as well.

During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. As a county which possessed five Title I schools, the low ranked attendance policy did fulfill the minimal, yet it did not fulfill 2 of the 6 required elements of the state policy. Muscogee County did not fulfill:

- the loss of driver license for all teens with driving age
 - local adoption per school of administering/creating an attendance policy
- this would be aligned with state policy standards.

Muscogee County's attendance policy revealed that there were eight important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention method to students before one reaches 5 absences
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An intervention plan for repeat offenders
- The policy was tabular, but lengthy (at least 10 pages)
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Muscogee County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Muscogee County score: 2.00 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,3,4,6,10,12,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 9,16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX D

McIntosh County Attendance Policy

McIntosh County's attendance policy mean score was 2.00. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the state regulatory attendance policy. As for mentioned, the state required six essential factors of every school district's attendance policy, the definition of truancy, loss of driver license for teens, corroboration with law enforcement faculties, parental notification, local school ownership and authority, and lastly the establishment of an attendance protocol committee. McIntosh County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. McIntosh County did not mention in its policy the loss of a driver license for all teens within the driving age.

McIntosh County had one middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 2082. As a rural Title I school district the pre-NCLB absence rate percentile was 14.55 and the post-NCLB absence rate percentile was 12.75. Even though there was a decrease in absence rates, the 1.80 percentile drop seemed to make no significant difference, but overall the analysis data was affective.

McIntosh County's attendance policy revealed that there were nine important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention method to students before one reaches 5 absences
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An intervention plan for repeat offenders
- The policy was tabular, but lengthy (at least 10 pages)

- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized McIntosh County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| McIntosh County score: 2.00 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 9 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX E

Seminole County Attendance Policy

Seminole County's attendance policy mean score was 2.06. It was the least restrictive when compared to the state regulatory attendance policy and the other twenty nine. As for mentioned the state requires six essential factors of every school district's attendance policy, the definition of truancy, loss of driver license for teens, corroboration with law enforcement faculties, parental notification, local school ownership and authority,

and the establishment of an attendance protocol committee.

Seminole county did not fulfill three basic requirements which were a part of the Georgia state attendance policy. They were:

- the establishment of 5 absences as part of the definition of “truancy,”
- the loss of driver license for all teens with driving age
- local adoption per school of administering/creating an attendance policy which would be aligned with state policy standards.

Seminole County’s middle school student population over four years was 488. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 255. The economically disadvantaged made up 52% of their middle school population. As a rural county, Seminole had only one middle school during 2004-2007 classified as a Title I school. The school did not meet AYP in 2007, 2005, nor in 2004. 2006 was the only year the school made adequate yearly progress.

The pre-NCLB absence rate was 17% and the post-NCLB absence rate was 10.5%. This was a 6.5% decrease in absence rates during the four years of the study. It should also be noted that Seminole county implemented no severity attendance policy components. Seminole county’s attendance policy revealed that there were five main characteristics that were provided in the county’s school policy. Those main characteristics were:

- An early intervention method to students before one reaches 5 absences
- An intervention plan from the school/administrative staff
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)

Conclusively the data also indicated that the high absence rates may have been significant; see the table below which depicted Seminole County school district's attendance policy ranking. The policy was weak and insufficient in meeting state minimal standards concerning its attendance policy; yet the absence rates decreased.

The 21 areas that rationalized Seminole County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Seminole County score: 2.06 | | Fulfilled Areas: 3,5,10,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 4,9,16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX F

Washington County Attendance Policy

Washington County's attendance policy mean score was 2.255. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the state regulatory attendance policy. As for mentioned, the state requires six essential factors of every school district's attendance policy, the definition of truancy, loss of driver license for teens, corroboration with law enforcement faculties, parental notification, local school ownership and authority, and lastly the establishment of an attendance protocol committee. Washington County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Washington did not mention in its policy the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Washington County had one middle school and the student population over 4 years was 3,111. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 3,111. The economically disadvantaged made up 100.0% of their middle school population. This county was classified as Title I during its four years. T.J. Elder Middle only made AYP once in 2006. The one year that T.J. Elder met AYP standards the attendance rate was 9.9%. During their 4 years, the county's pre-NCLB absence rate was 10.5% and by the end of the study, the post-NCLB absence rate was 8.5% with a resulted 2% decreased absence rate.

As a county which possessed only one Title I school, the low ranked attendance policy does seem to fulfill the minimal, yet it does not fulfill 1 of the 6 required elements of the state policy. Washington County did not fulfill the local adoption per school of administering/creating an attendance policy which would be aligned with state policy standards.

This one missing item may have been a result of this county only possessing one school, and therefore the board policy is its policy. Positively, Washington County's attendance policy revealed that there were nine important components which were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention method to students before one reaches 5 absences
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- Truancy Definition in the board's policy
- the loss of driver license for all teens with driving age
- a lengthy policy of at least 10 pages (detailed)
- An intervention plan for repeat offenders
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Washington County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Washington County score: 2.255 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,3,4,9,10,12,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX G

Madison County Attendance Policy

Madison County's attendance policy mean score was 2.29. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Madison County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Madison did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school. This may only be an oversight, or presumed policy because there was only one middle school within the county.

Madison County middle school's student population over 4 years was 4,924. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 2,391. The economically disadvantaged made up 49.0% of their middle school population. This county has had Title I status since 2004. The school did meet AYP in 2007 and 2006, but failed to meet state requirements in

2004-2005. The researcher observed that Madison County's economically disadvantaged students' absence rate was over 20% all four years they were measured for AYP.

During their 4 years, the county's absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Madison County's attendance policy reveals that there are twelve important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A written intervention plan from school administration
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- School withdrawal for repeat offenders
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)

The areas that rationalized Madison County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Madison County score: 2.29 | | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,5,6,9,10,11,13,14,18 | | |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | | | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program | | | |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership | | | |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 | | | |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee | | | |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed | | | |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody | | | |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed | | | |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX H

Chatham County Attendance Policy

Chatham County's attendance policy mean score was 2.318. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Chatham County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Chatham County had eleven middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 30,519. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 19,169. The economically disadvantaged made up 62.8% of their middle school population.

Chatham County had eight middle schools that had Title I status. The names of All the middle schools were, Bartlett Middle, Coastal Middle, DeRenne Middle and Hubert Middle, Mercer Middle, Myers Middle, Oglethorpe Middle, Shuman Middle, Southwest Middle, Tompkins Middle, and West Chatham Middle. The three schools that

were not Title I were Coastal, Oglethorpe and Southwest Middle. The population of these schools represented 52.8% of Chatham County's total population and 84.1% of its economically disadvantaged population.

In this study, Shuman and West Chatham did not become Title I until 2007. Despite the eight schools which possess the Title one status, Chatham County's overall percentage rate of middle schools making AYP in the past four years is 51%. As far as meeting AYP in 2007, there were nine schools out of eleven, or 82% overall. In 2006, there were seven out of eleven, or 63.6%, in 2005, there were four schools that met AYP out of eleven schools reporting or 36.3% and lastly in 2004, there were only two schools out of ten reporting a successful status, or a low 20% rating.

The data indicated that the schools did possess a high absence rate as high as 32% in several of their schools during the 2004 school year. Further research would be needed to determine all the factors which may have caused this system to not be successful in meeting AYP status; yet this county needs to be commended for its 51% overall rating.

The data also indicated that the highest pre-NCLB absence rates was in West Chatham Middle school. The rate was 32.75% pre-NCLB absence rate and decrease to 17.55% post-NCLB absence rate. This 15.20% absence rate change was significant enough to try and detect any significant differences within the district and its attendance policy.

There were three severity components used; loss of a driver's license, the loss of parental custody, and the child incarcerated to deter high absence rates. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Chatham County's attendance policy revealed that there were sixteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A Tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of “truancy” within its school district’s policy
- An intervention plan at 10 absences
- A administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver’s license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A rewards incentive program for those who heed to the policy
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Loss of custody
- Children can be incarcerated in a juvenile facility

The areas that rationalized Chatham County’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Chatham County score: 2.318 | | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,6,9,10,12,13,14,15,16,18,20,21 | | |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | | | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program | | | |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership | | | |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 | | | |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee | | | |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed | | | |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody | | | |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed | | | |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX I

Wayne County Attendance Policy

Wayne County’s attendance policy mean score was 2.318. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies and the one that the Georgia Department of Education used as its “Attendance Policy Model.” Wayne County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. The student population over 4 years was 5597 and the total economically disadvantaged student population was 3300. The economically disadvantaged made up 58.9% of their middle school population.

Wayne County did not possess the Title I status. Wayne County had two schools named Arthur Williams and Martha Puckett Middle. Arthur Williams made AYP in 2007, 2006, and 2004. In 2005, there seems to be no identifying evidence which may or may not indicate its reason for not meeting AYP. Martha Puckett middle did meet AYP in 2007 and 2006, but

failed in 2005 and 2004. The two years that Martha Puckett did not meet AYP the data indicated that it was also the highest absence rate years as well.

No significant difference existed in the observance of the data and further research would be needed to determine all the factors which may have caused this system to be successful in meeting AYP status. Conclusively, Wayne County's attendance policy revealed that there were sixteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy.

They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An early intervention at 10 absences
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A monetary fine
- An incentive program for those who abide by the policy

- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for not abiding by the law
- Loss of parental custody

The areas that rationalized Wayne County’s attendance policy rank were listed

below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Wayne County score: 2.3 18 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, 9,10,12,13,14,15,16,18,19,20 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX J

Ware County Attendance Policy

Ware County’s attendance policy mean score was 2.34. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Ware County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Ware did not mention in its policy the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Ware County had 3 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 6,292. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 3,986. The economically disadvantaged made up 63.3% of their middle school population. The three schools were Ware County Middle, Waycross Middle, and Ware Magnet Middle. Only two of the three schools were classified as Title I during the four years. Ware County and Waycross, the magnet school did not report an economically disadvantaged population at all.

Waycross Middle and Ware Magnet met AYP all four years whereas Ware County made in 2007 and 2006. The pre-NCLB absence rate for Ware Middle was the highest at 26.1% and the post-absence NCLB rate was 17.4% during the study. The district rate began at 12.23% and decreased to 8.33%. During their 4 years, the county's absence rates were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students.

Ware County's attendance policy revealed that there were ten important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A school withdrawal penalty for repeat offenders
- An intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Ware County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Ware County score: 2.34 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,6,9,10,11,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX K

Jenkins County Attendance Policy

Jenkins County's attendance policy mean score was 2.35. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Jenkins County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Jenkins did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local schools.

The student population over 4 years was 1,454 and the total economically disadvantaged student population was 1,454. The economically disadvantaged made up 100% of their middle

school population. Jenkins County had one middle school and it possessed the Title I status. Jenkins County Middle made AYP in 2006 and 2005, but failed to attain this status in 2007 and 2004. As a rural school district, there was a 50 percentile average over the four years that were recorded. Jenkins County did seem to possess a high absence rate in 2004 for students who missed over 15 days.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged, even though they were reported as one in the same. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Jenkins County's attendance policy revealed that there were sixteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy.

They were:

- A Tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An early intervention plan at 10 absences
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- In School Suspension
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)

- School Withdrawal
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An incentive programs for students who follow policy requirements
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Jenkins County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Jenkins County score 2.35 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, 9,10,11,2,13,14,15,18,19 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX L

Hall County Attendance Policy

Hall County's attendance policy mean score 2.375. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Hall County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except two. Hall did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school and the establishment of a clear definition of a "truant student."

Hall County's had 6 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 20,110. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 9,336. The economically disadvantaged made up 46.4% of their middle school population. The middle schools are named C.W. Middle, Chestatee Middle, East Hall Middle, North Hall Middle, South Hall Middle and West Hall Middle. Out of the six schools, only two of them are Title I schools, East Hall and South Hall. East Hall has never met AYP status and South Hall did meet AYP one year, 2004.

The highest absence rate within its district during the four years of the study was 10.6%; this rate decreased to 4.6%. Even though this district's absence rates decreased at least 5%, this particular middle school post absence rate result was 0.3% in 2007. Data indicated that Hall County's highest absence rates are attributed to the total population and not the economically disadvantaged population.

Conclusively, Hall County's attendance policy revealed that there were only eight important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A written intervention plan from school administration

- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law,
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy,
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforced and created their own attendance policy rules and regulations,
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Hall County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hall County score: 2.375 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,10,13,14,16,18, |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 4,16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX M

Mitchell County Attendance Policy

Mitchell County's attendance policy mean score was 2.41. It was one of the restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Mitchell County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except two. Mitchell did not mention in its policy, the use of DFACS, judges, and social service agencies to help deter high absence rates.

Mitchell County had one middle school and the student population over 4 years was 2239. The middle school was named Mitchell. The pre-NCLB absence rates were 7.7 and the post-NCLB absence rate was 7.8. There was no evident significant change in this district's absence rates, in fact the rates increased .1%. This district used two of the severity components, the loss of the student's driver's license and school withdrawal to deter high absence rates.

Conclusively, Mitchell County's attendance policy revealed that there were only eight important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A written intervention plan from school administration
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Mitchell County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mitchell County score: 2.41 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,6,11,14,16,18, |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 10 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX N

Bulloch County Attendance Policy

Bulloch County's attendance policy mean score was 2.423. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Bulloch County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Fulton County did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Bulloch County had 3 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 6,805. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 3,983. The economically disadvantaged made up 58.5% of their middle school population. All of the schools had Title I status. The middle schools were named Langston Chapel, Southeast Bulloch, and William James Middle. Southeast Bulloch and William James Middle have met AYP from 2004-2007. Langston Chapel had only met AYP standards in 2005; all other years have been unsuccessful for the county's AYP status. Further research was needed to determine all variables which may have shown significant differences which may exist within Bulloch County's attendance rates.

During their 4 years, the county's pre-NCLB absence rate was 16.25% and by the end of the study, the post-NCLB absence rate was 14.98% with only a result of 1.27% decrease. William James Middle actually increased its absence rates from pre-post NCLB, instead of decreasing.

Conclusively, Bulloch County's attendance policy revealed that there are thirteen important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of “truancy” within its school district’s policy
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A 10 absence intervention
- A loss of driver’s license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Bulloch County’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

 Bulloch County score: 2.423

 Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,9,10,11,12,13,14,18

 Missing State Policy Areas: 16

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX O

Burke County Attendance Policy

Burke County's attendance policy mean score was 2.428. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Burke County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Burke County had one middle school and the student population over 4 years was 4,953. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 4,953. The economically disadvantaged made up 100% of their middle school population.

Burke County middle had Title I status. In 2007 and 2004 the school failed to meet AYP, whereas in 2006 and 2005 the school was successful in meeting state standards. The overall percentage rate of middle schools in Burke County making AYP in the past four years was 50%. The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged.

During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students since the system reported their total population as the same as the economically disadvantaged. Conclusively, Burke County's attendance policy revealed that there were fourteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A Tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An 10 absence intervention
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Burke County's attendance policy rank were listed below

in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Burke County score: 2.428 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,19 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX P

Barrow County Attendance Policy

Barrow County's attendance policy mean score was 2.442. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Barrow County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Barrow County had four middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 8,726. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 4,051. The economically disadvantaged made up 46.4% of their middle school population.

Barrow County middle schools did not have Title I status. The names of all the middle schools were, Haymon-Morris Middle, Russell Middle, Westside Middle and Winder Barrow Middle. Westside Middle is the only school within its county to make AYP successfully for four years. The overall percentage rate of middle schools in Barrow County making AYP in the past four years is 55%. As far as meeting AYP in 2007, there were only 2 schools out of five,

in 2006, there were only four out of five schools reporting, in 2005, there were only two out of four schools reporting and in 2004, there were only two schools out of four reporting a successful status.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed during the pre-NCLB years, the percentage was 16.03% and the post years did decrease to 10.85%. During their 4 years, the county's absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students since the system reported their total population as the same as the economically disadvantaged.

Conclusively, Barrow County's attendance policy revealed that there were fourteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An 10 absence intervention
- A administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absentees in early stages

- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Barrow County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Barrow County score: 2.442 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,3,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,19 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX Q

Marietta City Attendance Policy

Marietta County's attendance policy mean score was 2.445. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Marietta County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Marietta County's had 3 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 8253. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 5376. The economically disadvantaged made up

65.1% of their middle school population. The middle schools were named Marietta 6th Grade, Marietta Charter and Marietta Middle.

Two out of the three schools had Title I status. The charter school began its existence in 2007 and was only able to report one academic school year. Marietta 6th grade met AYP in 2005-2007. In 2004 and 2006 the school failed to meet AYP status. The data indicates that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days not only existed among the economically disadvantaged, but also during the same two years that the school did not meet AYP. Marietta Middle's data followed the same pattern, but only showed this school not meeting AYP in 2004. Further research would be needed to determine all variables which may show significant differences which may have existed within Marietta City's absence rates.

During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Marietta City's attendance policy revealed that there were eleven important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- School Withdrawal
- Policy is lengthy and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The 21 areas that rationalized Marietta City’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Marietta City score: 2.445 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX R

Cobb County Attendance Policy

Cobb County's attendance policy mean score was 2.445. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Cobb County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Surprisingly Cobb County rates were relatively low to begin with; the pre-NCLB absences rates were 11.28% and 9.32% for the post-NCLB absence rates. There was only one severity components used; the loss of a driver's license.

Cobb County's had 24 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 108,480. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 35,762. The economically disadvantaged made up 32.9% of their middle school population. The middle schools are named Awtry Middle, Barber Middle, Camp Middle, Danielle Middle, Dodgen Middle, Dickson Middle, Durham Middle, Eat Cobb Middle, Floyd Middle, Garrett Middle, Griffin Middle, Hightower Middle, Lindley Middle, Lost Mountain Middle, Loving Good Middle, Mabry Middle, McClure Middle, McClesky Middle, Palmer Middle, Pine Mountain Middle, Simpson Middle, Smitha Middle and Tapp Middle.

Out of the 24 schools, only five of the schools had Title I status. Those five schools were Camp Middle, Garrett Middle, Griffin Middle, Floyd Middle and Lindley Middle. It should be noted that Floyd Middle did not attain Title I status until 2007. Of the five Title I schools in Cobb County, none of them met AYP status, except Garrett middle. Garrett did make AYP in 2005-2007, but failed to meet requirements in 2004. The non-Title I schools revealed that in most schools the highest absence rate for students over 15 days were the economically disadvantaged.

The Title I schools student population compared to the total student population in Cobb County accounts for only 24.4% and 47.4% of the economically disadvantaged population. Further research would be needed to determine all variables which may show significant differences which may have existed within Cobb County's absence rates.

Conclusively, Cobb County's attendance policy revealed that there were eleven important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A 10 absence administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- School Withdrawal
- Policy is lengthy and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)

The areas that rationalized Cobb County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Cobb County score: 2.45 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX S

Tift County Attendance Policy

Tift County's attendance policy mean score was 2.45. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Tift County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Tift did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Tift County had one middle school and the student population over 4 years was 4,482. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 2,315. The economically disadvantaged made up 51.7% of their middle school population. The only middle school was named Eighth Street Middle. Tift County was not a Title I school. In the four years, 2004-2007, Eighth Street middle has made AYP in 2007 and 2006. Data indicates that the two highest absence rates happened in 2005 and 2004, the same years the school did not meet AYP.

Also it was further noted that in 2004, the absence rate among the total population was 14.6% and decreased to 10.7% by the end of the study in 2007.

During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were not significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Tift County's attendance policy revealed that there were nine important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- Parents can face jail, if their children do not attend school
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The areas that rationalized Tift County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tift County score: 2.45 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,9,10,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX T

Gwinnett County Attendance Policy

Gwinnett County's attendance policy mean score was 2.458. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Gwinnett County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Gwinnett County has twenty middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 146,281. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 49,084. The economically disadvantaged made up 33.5% of their middle school population.

Gwinnett County had only five schools that possessed Title I status. The names of all the middle schools were, Alton Crews Middle, Berkmar Middle, Creekland Middle and Dacula Middle, Duluth Middle, Five Forks Middle, Frank Osborne Middle, Glenn C. Jones Middle, Lanier Middle, Lilburn Middle, Louise Middle, McConnell Pinckney Middle, Richards Middle,

Shiloh Middle, Snelville Middle, Summer Middle, Sweetwater Middle, Trickum Middle and Hull Middle. The five schools that were Title I were Berkmar, Lilburn, Louise, Summer, Sweetwater. The population of these schools represents 20% of Gwinnett County's total population and 58.1% of its economically disadvantaged population.

In this study, Sweetwater did not become Title I until 2007. Despite the five schools which possessed the Title one status, Gwinnett County's overall percentage rate of middle schools making AYP in the past four years is 71%. As far as meeting AYP in 2007, there were seventeen schools out of twenty, or 85% overall. In 2006, the county's worst year, there were twelve out of twenty, or 60%, in 2005, there were thirteen school that met AYP out of twenty schools reporting, or 65% and lastly in 2004, there were twelve schools out of sixteen reporting a successful status, or a total of a 75% success rating. Further research is needed to determine all the factors which may have caused this system to be successful in meeting its AYP status.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Gwinnett County's attendance policy revealed that there were twelve important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A rewards incentive program for those who heed to the policy
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law
- Children can be incarcerated in a juvenile facility

The areas that rationalized Gwinnett County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Gwinnett County score: 2.458 | | Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,6,9,10,12,14,15,16,18,19,21 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |
| **Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation | | |

APPENDIX U

Valdosta City Attendance Policy

Valdosta City's attendance policy mean score was 2.46. It was one of the least restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Valdosta City fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Valdosta did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Valdosta City had two middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 448 students. The names of the schools were Newbern and Valdosta Middle. The free/reduced lunch SES ratio was 80% and Newbern Middle was 61%. Both middle schools made up this Title I school district. Data indicated that the two highest absence rates happened in 2005 and 2004, the same years the school did not meet AYP. Also it was further noted that in 2004, the absence rate among the total population was 22% but dropped almost 7% during the duration of the study at Newbern Middle.

Valdosta City's attendance policy revealed that there were ten important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A 10 absence intervention plan
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A monetary fine
- A loss of driver's license

- Parents can face jail, if their children do not attend school
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS).

The 21 areas that rationalized Valdosta City’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Valdosta City score: 2.46 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,9,10,13,14,18,19 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX V

Fulton County Attendance Policy

Fulton County's attendance policy mean score was 2.491. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Fulton County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Fulton County did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school.

Fulton County's had 21 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 67,143. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 27,734. The economically disadvantaged made up 41.3% of their middle school population. Overall results indicated that this county did not make AYP status in 2007. The middle schools were named Autrey Middle, Bear Creek Middle, Crab Apple Middle, Campcreek Middle, Fulton Science Academy, Haynes Middle, Holcombe Middle, Hapeville Middle, Hopewell Middle, Kipp South Middle, Paul D. Middle, McNair Middle, Northwest Middle, Ridgeville Middle, Sandy Springs Middle, Sand Townes Middle, Ridgeville Middle, Woodland Middle, Webb Bridge Middle, and Taylor Road Middle.

Eleven out of the twenty-one schools have Title I status. The eleven schools were Sandy Springs Middle, Sand Townes Middle Bear Creek Middle, Hapeville Middle, Kipp South Middle, McNair Middle, Paul D. Middle, Ridgeville Middle, Campcreek and Woodland Middle. The pre-NCLB absence rate for students, who had missed over 15 absences in all schools was an average of 9.08% and the rates the post-NCLB absence rate was 7.4%.

The introduction of the new state mandated attendance policy may have been part of this significant turnaround within Fulton County. In 2007, nineteen school met AYP standards, in 2006, eighteen schools met AYP, in 2005 20 schools met AYP and in 2004, twelve schools met AYP standards with four schools not reporting data. The non-Title I schools reveal that in most schools the highest absence rate for students over 15 days are the economically disadvantage.

During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students, despite the data from 2004. Conclusively, Fulton County's attendance policy reveals that there are twelve important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- A 10 absence administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- An intervention plan implemented by school officials
- A loss of driver's license privileges
- School Withdrawal
- Parents jailed for breaking attendance law
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)

The areas that rationalized Fulton County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Fulton County score: 2.491 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,6,9,10,11,13,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX W

Macon County Attendance Policy

Macon County's attendance policy mean score was 2.52. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Macon fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one; the local school district ownership and adoption of the district's policy. Macon County had one middle school and the student population over 4 years was 2074.

Macon middle school's data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days not only existed among the economically disadvantaged, but also among the total student population. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. The pre-NCLB absence rate was 12.05% and the post-NCLB absence rate was 12.8%. The rates actually increased .25% during the four years of the study. As a Title I status middle school district, there were two severity components used within this district's attendance policy; loss of the student's driver's license and jailing the child for his/her attendance infractions.

Conclusively, Macon's attendance policy revealed that there were thirteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy

- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Macon City's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Macon City score: 2.55 | | Fulfilled Areas:2,4,5,9,10,12,13,14,18 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX X

Atlanta City Attendance Policy

Atlanta City's attendance policy mean score was 2.55. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Atlanta City fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Atlanta City had 22 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 41,916. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 31,674. The economically disadvantaged made up 76.0% of their middle school population.

All of the schools have Title I status, except one APS-CEP Partnership.

The middle schools are named Turner Middle, Sylvan Middle, Sutton Middle, Price Middle,

Parks Middle, Long Middle, King Middle, Kennedy Middle, Kipp West Middle, Kipp Achievement Academy, Inman Middle, Harper-Archer Middle, Coan, Middle, Charles R. Drew Middle, Bunche Middle, Brown Middle, Benjamin S. Carlson Middle, Atlanta Charter Middle, University Middle, Walden Middle, and Young Middle. In 2007 fifteen schools met AYP; in 2006 fifteen schools met the standards, in 2005 thirteen schools and only four schools made AYP in 2004.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days not only existed among the economically disadvantaged, but also among the total student population. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Atlanta City's attendance policy revealed that there were thirteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages

- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Atlanta City's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Atlanta City score: 2.55 | | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,9,10,11,13,14,18 | | |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | | | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program | | | |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership | | | |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 | | | |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee | | | |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed | | | |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody | | | |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed | | | |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX Y

Richmond County Attendance Policy

Richmond County's attendance policy mean score was 2.578. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Richmond County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Richmond did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local schools. The student population over 4 years was 35,603 and the total economically disadvantaged student population was 18,576. The economically disadvantaged made up 52.1% of their middle school population.

Richmond County had eleven middle schools, only seven of the school possessed Title I status. The names of all the middle schools are, East Augusta Middle, Glenn Hills Middle, Hephzibah Middle and Langford Middle, Morgan Road Middle, Murphey Middle, Segoe Middle, Spirit Creek Middle and Tubman Middle. In this study, Davidson, the eleventh school was not used in the area of attendance, because its data caused extreme outliers. The data showed that their attendance rate among the total population and the economically disadvantaged was at least 100% all four years.

Glenn Hills, Spirit Creek and Tubman Middle schools have never made AYP in the four years of this study's data; whereas Davison Magnet school made AYP all four year. The overall percentage rate of middle schools in Richmond County making AYP in the past four years was 25%. As far as meeting AYP in 2007, there were only three schools out of eleven, in 2006, there were only four out of eleven schools, in 2005, there were only two out of eleven schools reporting and in 2004, there were only two schools out of eleven reporting a successful status.

Further research is needed to determine all the factors which may have caused this system to not be successful in meeting AYP status. The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students.

Conclusively, Richmond County's attendance policy revealed that there were fourteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A Tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences

- A definition of “truancy” within its school district’s policy
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- In School Suspension
- Home Suspension
- A loss of driver’s license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law
- Children can be incarcerated in a juvenile facility

The areas that rationalized Richmond County's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Richmond County score: 2.578 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,6,7,8,9,10,12,13,14,18,19,21 |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX Z

Wilkes County Attendance Policy

Wilkes County's attendance policy mean score was 2.585. It was the most restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Wilkes County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy and had more additional requirements than any other county. The student population over 4 years was 1,708 and the total economically disadvantaged student population was 1,107. The economically disadvantaged made up 64.8% of their middle school population.

Wilkes County did possess the Title I status and did make AYP every year except 2004. The absence rate was very small and seems not to have affected the AYP standards. No significant difference seems to exist in the observance of the data and further research

is needed to determine all the factors which may be causing this system to be successful in meeting AYP status.

Conclusively, Wilkes County's attendance policy revealed that there were twenty one important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- An early intervention plan before 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An intervention plan at 10 absences
- A administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- In School Suspension
- Home Suspension
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- Fines over \$1000.00 dollars for lawbreaker

- Parents jailed
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Loss of custody
- Children can be incarcerated in a juvenile facility

The areas that rationalized Wilkes County’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Wilkes County score: 2.585 | | Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, 8,9,10,11,2,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21 | |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 0 | | | |
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program | |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership | |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 | |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee | |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed | |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody | |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed | |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX AA

Walker County Attendance Policy

Walker County's attendance policy mean score was 2.65. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Walker fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one; the local school district ownership and adoption of the district's policy. Walker County had two middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 6081.

Walker County middle school's data indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days not only existed among the economically disadvantaged, but also among the total student population. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. The pre-NCLB absence rate was 24.07 and the post-NCLB absence rate was 9.32%. The rates decreased overall by 14.65% during the four years of the study.

As a Title I status middle school district, there were four severity components used within this district's attendance policy; loss of the student's driver's license, monetary fine over \$1000.00 dollars, and jailing the child for his/her attendance infractions and the parent.

Conclusively, Walker's attendance policy revealed that there were thirteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A tardy policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A loss of driver's license

- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law

The areas that rationalized Atlanta City's attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Walker County score: 2.65 | Fulfilled Areas:2,4,5,9,10,12,13,14,17, 18,19,21 | |
| Missing State Policy Areas: 16 | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX BB

Bibb County Attendance Policy

Bibb County's attendance policy mean score was 2.653. It was one of the more restrictive policies when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Bibb County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy, except one. Bibb did not mention in its policy, the local policy administration and creation of an attendance policy within the local school. Bibb County had 7 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 21,950. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 16,655. The economically disadvantaged made up 75.8% of their middle school population.

In Bibb County all schools that have Title I status, except one Howard. The middle schools were named Appling Middle, Weaver Middle, Miller Middle, Rutland Middle, McElvoy Middle, Howard Middle, and Bloomfield Middle. In 2007 only 2 of the schools met AYP, Miller Magnet and McElvoy. Appling, Rutland and Weaver Middle Schools have never successfully met AYP during the 2004-2007. The overall percentage rate of middle schools in Bibb County making AYP in the past four years is 29.1%. In 2007, there were only 2 schools out of seven, in 2006, there were only 1 out of six schools reporting, in 2005, and in 2004, there were only 2 schools out of 5 reporting a successful attainment of AYP.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged. During their 4 years, the county's absence rates were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Bibb County's

attendance policy revealed that there were thirteen important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of “truancy” within its school district’s policy
- An 10 absence intervention
- An administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver’s license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law
- Child can be place in juvenile incarceration

The areas that rationalized Bibb County’s attendance policy rank were listed in the table.

 Bibb County score: 2.653

 Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,6,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,19,21

 Missing State Policy Areas: 16

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX CC

Columbia County Attendance Policy

Columbia County's attendance policy mean score was 2.654. It was one of the more restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Columbia County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. Columbia County had 7 middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 22,355. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 5,372.

The economically disadvantaged made up 24.0% of their middle school population. In Columbia County there were only two schools that had Title I status. The middle schools were named Riverside Middle, Lakeside Middle, Harlem Middle, Grovetown Middle, Greenbrier Middle, Evans Middle, and Columbia Middle. In 2007 every middle school within the county successfully met AYP; in 2006 and 2005 there were six successful schools, and in 2004 there were only four schools who met the set standards.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged. During their 4 years, the county's attendance rates and absences were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students.

Conclusively, Columbia County attendance policy revealed that there were thirteen important elements that were provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- A 10 absence intervention
- A loss of driver's license
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services(DFACS)
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine applied to parents who break the compulsory law
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Parents can be jailed for breaking attendance law
- Parents lose custody of their children

The areas that rationalized Columbia County's attendance policy rank were listed in the table.

 Columbia County score: 2.654

 Fulfilled Areas: 2,4,5,9,10,13,14,16,18,19,20

 Missing State Policy Areas: 0

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

APPENDIX DD

Clayton County Attendance Policy

Clayton County's attendance policy mean score was 2.710. It was the most restrictive when compared to the other school district attendance policies. Clayton County fulfilled all of the basic requirements of the Georgia state policy. This county used all of the severity components within its attendance policy. The pre-NCLB absence rates were 14.18% and the post-NCLB absence rates were 12.15% during the four years of the study.

Clayton County had fifteen middle schools and the student population over 4 years was 49,335. The total economically disadvantaged student population was 36,851. The economically disadvantaged made up 74.7% of their middle school population. Clayton County had twelve middle schools that had Title I status. The names of all the middle schools were Adamson Middle, Babb Middle, Forest Park Middle and Jonesboro Middle, Kendrick Middle, Lovejoy Middle, M.D. Roberts Middle, Morrow Middle, Mundy's Mill Middle, North Clayton

Middle, Pointe South Middle, Rex Mill Middle, Riverdale Middle, Sequoya Middle and Unidos Middle.

The three schools that were not Title I were Lovejoy, M.D. Roberts and Pointe South. The population of Title I schools represented 74.4% of Clayton County's total population and 77.7% of its economically disadvantaged population. In this study, Adamson did not become Title I until 2006 and the change did not come for Mundy's Mill until 2007. Clayton County's overall percentage rate of middle schools making AYP in the past four years was 35%.

As far as meeting AYP in 2007, there were seven schools out of fifteen, or 46% overall. In 2006, there were four out of thirteen, or 30.8%, in 2005, there were two schools that met AYP out of eleven schools reporting or 18% and lastly in 2004, there was only one school out of eleven reporting an unsuccessful status, or a low 0.9% rating. The absence rates were as high as 19.55% in several of their schools during the 2004 school year, and as low as 7.3%. Further research is needed to determine all the factors which may have caused this system to not be successful in meeting AYP status.

The data also indicated that the highest absence rates for students over 15 days existed among the economically disadvantaged. During their 4 years, the county's absence rates were significantly higher among economically disadvantaged students. Conclusively, Clayton County's attendance policy revealed that there were twenty important elements that are provided in the county's school policy. They were:

- A Tardy Policy
- An early intervention plan at 5 absences
- A definition of "truancy" within its school district's policy
- An intervention plan at 10 absences

- A administrative intervention plan for repeat offenders
- A loss of driver's license
- In School Suspension
- Home Suspension
- The intervention of state jurisdiction authorities such as judges, court appointed district attorneys, social workers, or the department of family and children services (DFACS)
- Policy Length over 10+ and detailed
- School Withdrawal
- A monetary fine
- Parental notification of absences in early stages
- The local schools can use their administrative power to enforce and create their own attendance policy rules and regulations
- Fines over \$1000.00 dollars for attendance lawbreaker
- Parents jailed
- An attendance protocol committee has established rules of policy
- Loss of custody
- Children can be incarcerated in a juvenile facility

The areas that rationalized Clayton County’s attendance policy rank were listed below in the table.

Clayton County score: 2.710 Fulfilled Areas: 1,2,4,5,6,7, 8,9,10,11,2,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 ,20,21

Missing State Policy Areas: 0

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1=Tardy Policy | 8= Home Suspension | 15=Incentive program |
| 2=Intervention at 5abs | 9= Loss of Driver License | 16=Local per school Policy Ownership |
| 3=Intervention before 5abs | 10=DFACS, Judge, social worker | 17=Fines over \$1000.00 |
| 4=Truancy at 5abs | 11=School Withdrawal | 18=Attendance Protocol Committee |
| 5=10 abs intervention | 12=Length of Policy | 19=Parents Jailed |
| 6= Intervention Plan | 13=Monetary fine | 20= Loss of custody |
| 7 = ISS Suspension | 14= Parental Notification | 21=Child Jailed |

**Numbers indicated the amount of points given to each area of the attendance policy evaluation

Table sources can be found: http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/_reports/ayp_2004/698.asp
http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/_reports/ayp_2005/search.asp
<http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp2006/694.asp>
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