

A STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ADMINISTRATION

by 4589

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B.S., Baker University, 1958

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Manhattan, Kansas

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This study of high school attendance administration was conceived:

- (1) to define the legal requirements which identify with pupil attendance,
- (2) to identify responsible personnel involved in the administration of pupil attendance, (3) to define the responsibilities and duties of the officer in charge of pupil attendance, (4) to describe methods and procedures used in the administration of pupil attendance, and (5) to develop a recommended program for effective attendance administration.

Essential data used in this study were secured from a review of textbooks in secondary school administration and review of periodical articles relating to the subject during the period of time from 1958 to 1969. Kansas school law was surveyed relating to school attendance.

The administration of high school attendance is delegated to the principal. It is important that he understand the problem if he is to develop and implement a program which will carry out the responsibility of maintaining a high level of pupil attendance in the high school.

The literature has little to offer in the way of a satisfactory solution to the problem of attendance administration. This study summarizes four successful programs dealing with this problem and constructs a recommended program which should aid in the solution of the problem of school attendance administration in Kansas High Schools.

The study indicates relatively little research has been directed toward solutions of the problems involved in achieving satisfactory pupil attendance. There is a definite trend away from negative approaches to the solution of attendance problems and toward understanding the causes underlying non-attendance by students. Professional guidance

programs, vocational education, and expansion of school programs are positive attempts to eliminate some of the causes of non-attendance. It is becoming increasingly recognized by administrators that attendance in school is important to the individual and helps him learn to accept adult responsibilities. School attendance is no longer the sole responsibility of the home but is a cooperative effort between home and school. A policy of attendance accounting which is strict, but fair, is necessary if satisfactory attendance is to be maintained by our students.

The recommended program includes the use of a card for a permanent record of attendance, the allowance of two non-excused absences per semester with student responsibility for non-abuse, and a pass form for readmission to class. It places responsibility on the student but provides communication to parents and develops information which can be used to counsel those students with attendance problems.

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Approved by:

  
Major Professor

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## INTRODUCTION

The administration of high school attendance is a problem which the Principal must understand if he is to develop and implement a program which will carry out his responsibility for maintaining a high level of pupil attendance in the high school. The effectiveness of the school in providing educational opportunity to every eligible youth depends to a degree upon the adequacy of high school attendance administration.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is: (1) to define the legal requirements which identify with pupil attendance; (2) to identify responsible personnel involved in the administration of pupil attendance; (3) to define the duties and responsibilities of the officer in charge of pupil attendance; (4) to describe methods and procedures used in the administration of pupil attendance; and (5) to develop a recommended program for effective attendance administration.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Data used in this study were secured by: (1) review of textbooks in secondary school administration which were published during the period of time between 1958 and 1968; (2) review of periodical articles published between 1960 and 1969 which related to the subject; and (3) survey of Kansas school law relating to school attendance.

Materials in textbooks and articles were analyzed in terms of the purpose of the study and then developed and described in summary form.

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH  
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Little research has been directed toward a solution of the problem of how to achieve satisfactory pupil attendance. Compulsory attendance laws have increased school attendance where they are rigidly enforced.<sup>1</sup> Provisions for enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws vary from state to state. In some states, the local school officials may decide to suspend a pupil from school but may not expel the pupil except upon direction of the chief state school officer.<sup>2</sup>

Schools must determine whether they will make use of public power and legal prosecution or emphasize adherence to the law through the use of visiting teachers and social workers. Difficulty in enforcing methods of securing regular school attendance at the local level have resulted from many obstructions and objections from parents. They charge infringement of parental rights over the child, interference with business by elimination of child labor, an un-Americanism on the part of the school in arrogating a new power to govern. Rural communities need these students for agricultural work and work in the home. However, it has been recognized by a vast majority of people that an efficient public school system in any community is predicated on the regular attendance

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1 J. B. Edmonson, Joseph Roemer, and Francis L. Bacon, "Changes in Enrollment Characteristics," The Growth and Development of the Secondary School, (New York: The MacMillan Co. 1953) p50.

2 Van Miller and Willard B. Spalding, "Decisions to Be Made in Providing Education," The Public Administration of American Schools, (New York: World Book Co. 1952) p57.



of its children.<sup>3</sup>

The compulsory public school attendance of the child is now recognized as a parental responsibility. The state may fine or imprison the parent for his neglect and even force the child to attend school.<sup>4</sup>

Geographic attitudes toward compulsory attendance are taken into consideration. Kansas schools allow students to remain out of school to help parents in farming operations, providing the non-attendance is not too frequent, the latter being determined by the administrator.

Truancy is a symptom, not a disease and unless the symptoms are corrected, further complications may develop. It is principally a problem of adolescence and usually begins in junior high school and reaches a peak in the sophomore and junior years of the senior high school. Boys are more guilty of truancy than girls and most chronic non-attenders are slow learners or are from low income families.<sup>5</sup>

Others factors contributing to non-attendance are the following:

(1) maladjustment of the student with a particular teacher, (2) fears related to grades or failure in one or more classes, (3) a feeling of not belonging, (4) a lack of acceptance by his peers, (5) severe disappointment in school life involving a love affair or failure in athletics, (6) the development of associations with companions not attending school and keeping him in more thrilling activities outside of school, (7) worries or problems related to home conditions, or himself, which may make it difficult for him to concentrate on school activities, and thus lead to embarrassment in class, (8) a lack of personal attractiveness or clothing comparable to that of other youngsters in school,

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Yeager, "The Administration of School Attendance," Administration and the Pupil, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949) pp69-70.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p52.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp69-70.

(9) inability to meet financial costs, (10) a lack of opportunity in school and out to give vent to an unusual amount of energy of a physical and social sort, and (11) the impractical nature of the content of the curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

Illness and work are many times listed as excuses for non-attendance.

Illness has been found to be merely the cause stated by parents in a high proportion of cases where other and more complicated causes were involved. The real factors contributing to poor attendance are inter-related and they often have their origin in the child's basic maladjustment, the failure of the school to challenge him, or the lack of intelligent guidance and social work on the part of the school. Parental neglect, parental indifference, ignorance, or negligence are also sometimes related to the child's non-attendance.<sup>7</sup>

#### Accounting of School Attendance

Not all administrators agree on the best method of accounting for school attendance. Some are inclined to place the responsibility for the accuracy and adequacy of such records and reporting on the teachers. Others assume it is an administrative problem and is not the concern of individual teachers. The job of the teacher is to teach, therefore, the administration of pupil attendance is clearly an administrative function to be carried out by the principal or an assistant principal with like authority.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Earl R. Douglass, "Educational Accounting and Reporting," Modern Administration of Secondary Schools (Boston: Ginn and Company 1954) p334.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas E. Lawson, "Office Functions," School Administration (New York: Odyssey Press, 1958) p271.

<sup>8</sup> Percy E. Burrup, "Planning and Administering the School Program," Modern High School Administration (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962) p146.

Adequate accounting of attendance can save the schools a great deal of time in gathering the basic information needed to claim state funds. Information as to the mental and emotional stability of individual students is also secured and future planning can take into consideration curriculum changes to meet the needs of these unstable students.

#### Enforcement of School Attendance

Since the basis of school attendance is compulsory, the first suggested approach to its improvement is through legislative enactment or adequate law enforcement or both. Administrators in the past relied upon negative approaches to enforce attendance. These devices included detention rooms, making up time and lessons missed, black lists, early arrival at school for a set period of time, attaching stigma in some tangible form, using a complex system of records to cause annoyance of student and parent, and calling the parent on the telephone at each absence. The last method identified has proved most successful in enforcement of attendance as it causes embarrassment to the parents when their child has an invalid excuse.<sup>9</sup>

Positive approaches have become more prevalent during the past ten years. Many administrators turn the attendance problem over to the student council. Others have increased rewards for attendance and competitive activities such as athletics have been used to improve attendance. However, the chronic cases, unless greatly interested in athletics, will continue their tendency toward truancy. There have been, however, changing trends in the administration of attendance that have brought improvement to the solution of the problem.

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<sup>9</sup> Yeager, op. cit., p103.

# LEGAL REQUIREMENTS WHICH IDENTIFY WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF ATTENDANCE

In order for any student to receive the finest education available, he should be in attendance every day, if possible. A stern policy regarding absenteeism is one way to make this possible. It could limit the always potential truant case. Past records show that parents are going to help or hinder this program, depending on what experiences they have had as students. The school must inform the parent as to the procedure on attendance if it expects cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

The administration of the school attendance of children, although essentially a state function, must depend for its efficiency upon local management.<sup>11</sup>

An accurate census record of every child of school age is the first step in providing for the attendance of eligible children.<sup>12</sup>

Section 72-1110 of the statutes of the State of Kansas states:

The board of education of each unified district, the school board of each common-school district and the board of education of each city school district shall cause an annual census to be taken of all children under the age of 21 years residing in the district as of the first day of January. Such census shall show separately the number of children under the age of 5 years, the number between the ages of five and sixteen, who have not completed their elementary education, and the date of birth of all such children and such other information relating to such children as may be required by law or under regulations adopted

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<sup>10</sup> Edward L. Schultz, "Attendance Headaches," Clearing House, May, 1963, No. 9 (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press) p546.

<sup>11</sup> Yeager, op. cit., p70.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p70.

by the state superintendent of public instruction. Such information shall be ascertained by means of personal interviews with families of children living in the district; provided, that boards of education may use any other reasonable method of ascertaining such information when approved by the state superintendent of public instruction.<sup>13</sup>

While the purpose of the school census is primarily to assist in the enforcement of the compulsory school attendance laws other important purposes have been developed. The census ascertains the nature and scope of educational service that a school district must provide, provides a basis for the developing of a school building program; and provides the basis for the enforcement of compulsory school attendance.<sup>14</sup>

The census serves other purposes in the local district. These are to (1) ascertain essential facts as to beginning children; (2) locate those children who move into, out of, or about the district; (3) provide for new groups of children specified by law; (4) check enrollments as well as absences in public as well as private schools; (5) locate parental responsibility; (6) discover the employment of the child; (7) discover home conditions and improve home-school relationships; (8) discover the causes of non-attendance; and, (9) check truancy.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, the census is the basic record---the beginning of the school's accounting for its students.<sup>16</sup>

The State of Kansas has followed the lead of other states in regard to compulsory education. These requirements have been strengthened

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<sup>13</sup> State Department of Education, 1969 School Laws of Kansas (Topeka: State Department of Education, 1969) p376.

<sup>14</sup> Yeager, op. cit., pp69-70.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p71.

<sup>16</sup> J. E. Edmonson, Joseph Roemer, and Francis L. Bacon, "Budgeting and Accounting," The Administration of the Modern Secondary School (New York: The Macmillan Co. 1958) p183.

recently. The present law, 72-1111 as amended by the 1969 legislature by SB226, states:

Every parent, guardian or other person in the State of Kansas, having control over or charge of any child who has reached the age of seven (7) years and is under the age of sixteen (16) years, shall require such child to attend continuously a public school or a private, denominational or parochial school taught by a competent instructor, each school year, for such a period as the public school of the school district in which the child resides is in session.

Any child who is physically or mentally incapacitated for the work of the public schools is exempt from the provisions of this act, but . . . when an exemption is claimed . . . the superintendent of schools shall have the child examined by a physician. If the child is found capable of doing the work of the school system, he is no longer exempt.<sup>17</sup>

#### PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The administration of attendance accounting in our high schools is the responsibility of the principal.<sup>18</sup>

This responsibility is most often placed in the hands of the school secretary or a teacher. The job of the teacher is to teach, therefore, the administration of pupil attendance is clearly an administrative function to be carried out by the principal or an assistant principal with like authority.<sup>19</sup>

As the scope and function of the school enlarges and as its social service aspects are related to the administration of attendance this

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<sup>17</sup> State Department of Education, op. cit. p376.

<sup>18</sup> Stan Federman, "Dear Teacher: I Was Absent Because . . ." American School Board Journal, September, 1964, p24.

<sup>19</sup> Burrup, op. cit. pl46.

department becomes more integrated within the structure of the school system. There are four main types of organization for the administration of pupil attendance:

Type I. Attendance service is a major division of the school system embracing all of its special pupil adjustment services in one department and in charge of an assistant superintendent.

Type II. Similar to Type I but in charge of a director of the department.

Type III. The director of attendance is responsible, not to the assistant superintendent, but directly to the city superintendent. Superiority is claimed for this type in its more direct contacts through the department from superintendents, principals, and teachers. The absentee and problem child are dealt with more expeditiously.

Type IV. The attendance department is one of a number of separate special service departments or divisions of the school organization, each under a different director. The virtue of this type is in the equality of the services of the departments and their proper coordination, as medical science with psychological science.<sup>20</sup>

The major goal of attendance administration is not related to state aid. School systems today look at the whole child. His needs are determined and approaches envisioned to meet these needs. To accomplish this, it is necessary for the student to be in school. As the student develops regular attendance habits it is hoped that he will enjoy his attendance. Likewise, if attendance is enjoyable to the student he will benefit and society will benefit. The attendance officers in today's schools are well-trained, dedicated persons who seek the enrichment of the whole child for the child's sake.

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<sup>20</sup> Yeager, op. cit. pp74-75.



## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ATTENDANCE OFFICERS

Concepts of attendance have changed during this decade. Formerly, the attendance service rested almost entirely upon the idea of compulsion. Police power is now less emphasized. Schools now attempt to meet the needs of all students. Federal financial assistance has allowed schools to initiate more vocational courses. Professional guidance programs are now required in all Kansas school districts. Some districts have employed school psychologists. These additions to the educational structure have brought about an improvement in school attendance by appealing to new interests of students. Professional help has aided in determining causes of non-attendance and has helped the student find himself. School districts have moved to place enforcement of attendance upon a specific individual, the attendance officer. This trend toward more adequate enforcement has, in itself, improved attendance.

The visiting teacher movement has spread throughout the United States, especially in larger cities in Eastern states. The visiting teacher coordinates activities of the guidance counselor, the psychologist, existing social agencies, relatives, the home, and the student.<sup>21</sup> It is apparent that the "hooky cop" approach to attendance administration is being abandoned.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Yeager, op. cit. pp80-82.

<sup>22</sup> John E. Corbally, Jr., T. J. Jensen, and W. Frederick Staub, "Instructional Leadership," Educational Administration: The Secondary School, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1961) p99.



## METHODS OF ATTENDANCE ACCOUNTING

There are many variations of workable and satisfactory systems of attendance accounting which eliminate or minimize the disadvantages mentioned previously. Such systems usually involve the following principles and procedures which can vary according to school requirements:

1. Teachers are required to report attendance to the office---hourly, daily, or at whatever interval required.
2. Individual records are kept for each student in the attendance office. They can be kept conveniently on 5" x 8" cards and include such information as names, dates, or periods of absence, reasons for absence, and a place for the signature of the student each time he re-enters school after any kind of absence.
3. Students report to the central attendance office to obtain readmittance permission after an absence. Here they are given their own cards on which they fill in the reason for the absence and then sign the card in the presence of the office secretary or clerk.
4. Admittance permits are given to students who have violated attendance regulations after they have filled out and signed their cards properly. The classroom teacher's function is completed when the student hands her the office signed permit. The teacher exercises no value judgment upon the nature of the excuse; this is the responsibility of the attendance officer. The teacher's duty has been kept to a minimum; she has reported the roll of attendance in each of her classes and has insisted that all of her home room or first-period students clear themselves in the office for attendance violation regardless of the cause. She is then free to spend nearly all her time on classroom instruction.
5. The principal, or other attendance officer reviews the records of excuses offered by the students and does whatever checking or follow-up work he deems necessary or advisable. He can check on violations before the student is readmitted; he does not need to wait for parent-signed excuses. He can be more consistent in his interpretation, evaluation, and penalties than any group of teachers could be. In the event of unexcused violations or truance he has on hand the student-signed permanent attendance record which is invaluable for student and parent conferences.<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Grant Hendrickson, Vice-Principal of Interlake High School in Bellevue, Washington, has developed a new approach to the problem of

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<sup>23</sup> Burrup, op. cit. pp146-147.

non-attendance. He has initiated a system designed for the ninety per cent of the students who do not create attendance problems. The system, at the same time, allows the school to take definite steps to correct the deviant behavior of the ten per-cent. His program accomplishes three specific goals.

It should provide regular, useful information to the parents on student attendance patterns. It should equip the school staff with the kind of usable information necessary to enforce necessary attendance regulations and do an effective job of counseling with attendance defiants.

It should cut paper work for the professional staff and cut down the amount of time spent in the attendance reporting process.<sup>24</sup>

The program of Hendrickson at Interlake High School works as follows:

Each period members of the teaching staff record the names of all students who are not present in their class during that period. They make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If a student comes in late, his name is crossed from the list and the student is considered tardy. All absences are reported on the same sheet of paper throughout the day and that sheet is turned in to the attendance office at the end of the day. The attendance secretary then enters these absences upon a mark sense card.

At the end of the week these cards are fed into the computer which, in turn, prints out an absence report for each student who has been absent. The program is written so that a postcard is printed for each student who has missed two periods or more. This card is then mailed to the student's home.

Under this system no excuses are brought from home. It is up to the student to explain the absences recorded on the data card to the satisfaction of his parents.

What the school staff says, in essence, is that if the parents are satisfied with student reasons for absence, the school is satisfied.

A duplicate of the reports going home to the parents comes to the school at the same time. The school staff---counselors, assistant principal, nurse---check these reports weekly for patterns of attendance deviation which need treatment. These are then discussed with the student. In some cases appropriate disciplinary

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<sup>24</sup> Grant Hendrickson, "A Modern Approach to Attendance Taking," The Clearing House, Vol. 43, October 1968 (New Jersey, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press) ppl06-107.

action is taken; in other cases, the counseling process is emphasized.

The system also provides the possibility of an immediate summary of attendance whenever it is needed. By marking the appropriate spot on the data card the attendance secretary may call for a complete print-out of that student's attendance since the beginning of the school year. This latter is a stop-gap measure which will be replaced in the near future by a more immediate retrieval system. A cathode ray terminal will be placed in the school permitting instantaneous retrieval of information on the student's attendance pattern.<sup>25</sup>

There are still some difficulties encountered in this process such as a lack of coordination between the data processing staff and the high school staff due to geographic location and misunderstandings between the programming staff and the school staff. Students sometimes take the weekly reports from the mail box before the parents can see them. Inaccuracies and inconsistencies in teacher reporting have caused difficulties also. Some parents balk at accepting the increased responsibility placed upon them with this system. Finally, students who might decide to run away from home or leave school for the day to get into trouble elsewhere are not immediately detected. It is felt, however, that the advantages of the system outweigh the disadvantages.

On the surface the program at Interlake seems successful and is a new approach to the solving of the problem of student attendance.

A plan used in Portage (Wisconsin) High School brought a sixty per-cent decrease in student absenteeism. In essence here is how the plan operates:

Previously, when a student returned to school after an absence, he was required to present a note from home or from a doctor confirming a legitimate illness. As in most schools, this entitled the student to an excused admission slip which admitted him to all

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<sup>25</sup> Hendrickson, op. cit. pp107-108.

his classes and authorized teachers to permit him to make up his work. This, however, often required much prodding and followup time on the part of the teachers.

We now issue an assignment slip along with the admission slip. This slip is a simple form which has a line space for each period of the day. The student will write in his name and list each subject. In addition, there are two spaces, one for the date the slip is issued and the other for the date the slip must be returned to the assistant principal. The slip must be presented to each teacher along with the admission slip at the beginning of each class period.

If the procedure is followed properly the student would first procure the assignments which the teacher required, written by the teacher in the proper space, and it would not be signed by the teacher until the assigned makeup work was completed.

For each day of school missed, a student is given two days to complete all of the class assignments. Only after the makeup assignments are submitted to all the teachers for their approval and signatures will the absence be approved. In this manner, the student, not the teacher, is made solely responsible for obtaining the assignments for the day, or days, he was absent, and for doing those assignments in the time provided.

Failure to hand in the completed makeup slip to the office by the date due usually resulted in disciplinary action. This can be in the form of assigned study time after school hours, restriction from participation in school activities, attending assemblies and denial of other privileges.

Where circumstances reveal that the time allowed for makeup and the work involved might aggravate or jeopardize a student's health, time is extended. We only ask that the students or parents bring this to the attention of the teachers or administration. We also ask the teacher to use discretion and be vigilant to the students' education and health.

Success of any such program is based upon the consistency under which it operates. Its effectiveness depends upon the strength in following up students and keeping records. Once the policies are established and the rules explained, teachers and administrators must remain cooperative and consistent in enforcing them.

We feel it is time to reverse the findings of sociologists which set teachers on a particular social scale with the implications that they do not and cannot adjust themselves to make honest evaluation and judgments of their students. In implementing this plan we observed an attitude of appreciation and keen understanding of adolescent society. Teachers had to be sympathetic while firm, flexible while demanding, and generous toward the needs of their students.

Good records mean efficiency. Names of absentees are not just listed, but properly recorded with dates of absences, makeup time allowed and date of actual completion of work. All these

records are filed in the student's file for reference in evaluating later absences or circumstances revolving around responsibility and duties of the student.<sup>26</sup>

A common procedure for many high schools, and one which usually secures satisfactory results, is a telephone call to the home in cases of all student absences. If an absence is determined to be unexcused, a conference is held with the student. Upon the second unexcused absence, the parents are included in the conference. It has been found that parents are more interested in the attendance of their child when this procedure is enforced.<sup>27</sup>

A unique plan of attendance accounting has been implemented at Colton (Oregon) High School. Under this plan the student must write his own excuse on a form provided by the school. The youngsters are asked to "keep it short," otherwise they are on their own. Doubtful excuses are investigated. The principal initiated what he calls a "planned absence" policy in which students are allowed five absences a year for any reason whatsoever---providing they make suitable arrangements with teachers to make up any work they miss. The only stipulation is that the reason for the "planned absence" be truthful. A lie simply costs the student the remainder of his "planned" days. Students consider the plan very successful in improving attendance since responsibility and trust is placed with the student.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ben J. Russo and Lloyd Rueb, "Cure for Absenteeism," Wisconsin Journal of Education, February 1965, pp22-23.

<sup>27</sup> Schultz, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Federman, op. cit., p24.

The methods and procedures mentioned represent new and varied attempts to solve the much neglected area of student attendance.

There is an attitude on the part of some persons that truancy is primarily a school problem. Just because the symptoms of truancy show up in school does not mean that it is necessarily a school problem. Many times the causes lie outside the school setting and are only reflected in the school. The student often faces tensions at home that are released in the school setting. Truancy is only an escape mechanism.<sup>29</sup>

The high school student with chronic non-attendance habits must be understood. The attendance administrator must cooperate fully with guidance personnel and social workers in this matter. However, since it is the primary duty of attendance administrators to keep the student in school, a method of accounting must be developed. This method of accounting will vary with each administrator. It is important that secondary students be treated as adults, not as children. It is also important to recognize that with each absence, whether excused or unexcused, the student has missed an important segment of his course material. If the student is to be treated as a young adult he must accept the responsibility of school attendance.

#### A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM

A procedure is needed for use by the administrator whose responsibility is attendance accounting. The following program and the

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<sup>29</sup> Richard M. Kayser, "The Meaning of Good School Attendance," American Association of Secondary School Principals, October, 1959, pp90-91.



procedures suggested, based on the material covered by this study, should make possible the development of a successful operation.

The use of a five by eight note card, such as the one described by Burrup,<sup>30</sup> for each student for a permanent record of attendance is recommended.

Each student would be allowed two non-excused absences per semester provided arrangements were made with the student's teachers prior to the absence. The student, upon return for re-admittance would write the reason for his absence on the five by eight card and initial this card. Parental notes would be optional. If, upon a spot check by the attendance administrator, the student is found to be untruthful in his excuse, his remaining day of absence for the semester would be forfeited. If the absences occur again the student will be admitted only after a conference with the parents. The five by eight card is a ready reference of absences and excuses are written by the student himself. This procedure, implemented in the Colton (Oregon) High School, has been quite successful in decreasing truancy and has the support of the majority of the students.<sup>31</sup>

A student would be readmitted to class using a simple pass form. However, he would have an assignment sheet in which teachers would copy missed work, or work to be made up. If not completed within the time period contracted, the attendance officer should call a conference of

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<sup>30</sup> Burrup, op. cit. p147.

<sup>31</sup> Federman, op. cit., p24.

student, teacher and parent to work out a program for makeup of work. This procedure where used has brought about a sixty per-cent decrease in absenteeism.

This program, in its basic form, includes the use of a card for a permanent record of attendance, the allowance of two non-excused absences with the student being responsible for non-abuse, and a pass form for readmission to class. It places responsibility on the student but provides communication to parents and develops information which can be used to counsel students with attendance problems.



### SUMMARY

The effectiveness of the school in providing educational opportunity to every eligible youth depends to a degree upon the adequacy of high school attendance administration. The administrator must understand the problem if he is to develop and implement a program to improve the high school attendance problem.

Compulsory attendance laws have increased school attendance where they are enforced. However, schools must determine whether they will make use of public power and legal prosecution. Most schools hesitate to take a problem into the courts due to the expense and adverse public opinion created. The real factors contributing to poor attendance are interrelated and they often have their origin in the child's basic maladjustment, the failure of the school to motivate him, or the lack of intelligent guidance and social work on the part of the school.

Negative enforcement is being recognized as outmoded and more positive approaches are being implemented. Increased state and federal financial aid has allowed school systems to implement broader curricula, initiate vocational courses, and acquire professional guidance programs.

Attendance accounting is the responsibility of the high school principal. He is aided in this effort by teachers, secretaries, and assistant principals. The literature, although limited in the subject of school attendance did present four approaches to the solution of this problem. These approaches are summarized on pages 11-18 of this paper. The system of teacher reporting, individual recording, student reporting, issuance of admittance permits, and review by an attendance officer, as described by Burrup on page 11 of this report should be

useful to an administrator searching for a solution to the problem of attendance accounting. The Interlake (Washington) program is reported to be effective but since it requires a computer system, would be unattainable for most school districts. The plan at Portage (Wisconsin) has merit since a sixty per-cent decrease in absenteeism was attained. The Colton (Oregon) plan is an attempt to place the responsibility of school attendance upon the student. The recommended program is an attempt to coordinate traditional enforcement procedures with portions of each of the four studies summarized in this report. Note cards, readmittance slips, and other necessary materials are readily available and are inexpensive. The program does not depart decisively from most traditional programs now in existence and should, therefore, be effective at most Kansas secondary schools.

The attendance administrator is no longer a policeman. He must attempt to understand but not condone the actions of the student with chronic non-attendance habits. The attendance administrator must cooperate with guidance personnel and social workers in this matter. It is important to treat secondary students as young adults, not children. Attendance in school is important to the individual and helps him learn to accept adult responsibilities. A policy of attendance accounting which is strict, but fair, is necessary if satisfactory attendance is to be maintained by students.

A recommended program including the use of a card for a permanent record of attendance, the allowance of two non-excused absences with the student being responsible for non-abuse, and a pass form for

readmission to class was conceived to be used as a guide for establishing procedures to improve attendance administration in secondary schools.

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