Youth Rights, Truancy and Washington State's Becca Bill

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A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2012

Reading Committee:

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree: Department of Geography

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Abstract

This research investigates truancy in Washington State framed as an issue of youth rights. Washington's Becca Bill requires schools to track and address students with multiple unexcused absences, using court as a last resort. The study uses mixed methods to explore the variation in truancy and petitions at the school level. It focuses on the experience of truancy up to and including the truancy petition. Count modeling using data on students with unexcused absences from school years 2003-2004 through 2006-2007 examines truancy at the school level. A survey of principals provides information for assessing the role of school environment. A latent class analysis on the survey results forms the basis for a predictive model to determine what changes schools could make to reduce absenteeism. A photography project with youth in two alternative schools, and interviews with parents and other adults who work with youth supplements the quantitative data. The study finds that intergenerational relations are important; that categories of youth rights conflict with each other, and that changes in school environment can affect truancy. It proposes that a model of youth rights other than the tradition of autonomous individuality is needed to reduce truancy while respecting youth rights to education and self-determination.

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Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank my advisor, Suzanne Davies Withers for her insights and encouragement. I also thank my committee, Richard Morrill, Mark Ellis and John Findlay for their patience.

A number of organizations contributed to this study. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provided data on students with unexcused absences, with special thanks to Jeff Soder for clarifying data mysteries. The Seattle Public Schools granted permission for this project in their alternative schools, where teachers and staff graciously wove this project into the school day. RightBrain.org allowed this research in conjunction with their photography classes. The Changes Parent Support Group permitted me to recruit parents through their organization. Thanks also to Carl McCurley at the National Center for Juvenile Justice for his assistance in obtaining information on crime and domestic violence. The Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology at the University of Washington hosted the data, and thanks to Anita Rocha for her statistical explanations.

A special thank you goes to all participants who took time out of their busy days to sit and talk, and to the principals who patiently filled out the survey.

This would not have been possible without the faith and support of family and friends. David Dunham, you have been my constant champion. Anne Weekes, our walks kept us grounded. Thanks also to Kate B, Kate C, Judith, Sabra and Kati for your understanding over the years.

Finally, I'd like to appreciate teachers who looked out for their students. Mr. Stores arm-wrestled boisterous boys, preventing potential classroom misbehavior. Orpha Curry tolerated no fools, but always announced her immanent arrival and never had to report anyone. Betty Hurley-Lawrence shepherded stressed and ambitious nontraditional students through the challenges of adult education.

Chapter I — Introduction

If you drive around during school hours, you will notice places where young people congregate. Some of them are homeless, out of school for work or they have dropped out, but many are skipping school. If you could peer into the houses, you would discover school-age youth staying home, hanging out with friends, also out of school. You might think of the popular references to truancy such as its humorous portrayal in the movie "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" (Hughes, 1986), or the tradition of senior skip day that persists in many schools (Dyer, 2006; Parmet, 2004). Popular perception may hold it harmless, but truancy — or skipping school, cutting class, bunking off — is an issue of growing concern.

This concern stems from increased awareness of truancy's link to dropping out of high school. Most agree that the long-term consequences of high school dropout cost students and society because of the reduced economic opportunities for those lacking education (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006; Kearney, 2008; NCES, 2011). While the occasional skipped class has no long-term effects, when students develop a pattern of repeated absences they are at much higher risk for dropping out. It follows that concern about high school dropout rates must encompass concern for those who avoid school.

This study is framed using truancy to represent larger debates around youth rights. In Washington State, a set of laws called the Becca Bill address status offenses such as running away or substance abuse, but this research focuses on unauthorized absence from school. The Bill requires schools and parents to recognize and attempt to re-engage students who exceed 7-10 unexcused absences. Failing that, schools must file truancy petitions and bring students to court (see Appendix 1). Truancy's existence is not surprising. That youth with occasional absences develop chronic truancy, however, illuminates a number of concerns about the relations between adults and youth.

School is an important site for adult-youth relations, as students incorporate non-family staff, teachers and administrators into their social milieu. If youth become involved with the law, they interact with another set of adults.

Whether these interactions are desired or avoided, they are often the main exposure to adult worlds outside of family. A number of studies examine what happens once students receive a truancy petition, but this study is concerned with the pre-court process of truancy and youth-adult interactions during that process.

The research has four components. First, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provided historical data on truant students by school for the years 2003-2007. Combined with contextual information, the data provided a picture of truancy and its geographic variation in Washington.

Second, a series of interviews in 2009-2010 provided in-depth and personal coverage of how truancy is experienced by those involved or affected by truancy. Students at two alternative schools in Seattle, their teachers and other staff contributed their insights. Community workers who facilitate school re-engagement through advocacy or social work, employees in the justice system and others engaged in anti-truancy efforts were included to obtain opinions from those who work with Becca in their professional capacities. Parents of students with attendance problems gave their perspective of schools and the legal process.

Next, students were interviewed as a way of exploring the role of important places in young lives. The interviews were held in conjunction with a photography class conducted by RightBrain.org, a non-profit that brings arts to alternative schools. Two alternative schools participated in the school year 2008-2009.

Finally, informed by information from the interviews, a survey of principals in Washington State in 2009 collected information on school environments. Survey results were combined with the historical truancy data and used to model the effects of those aspects of school that could influence school attachment. Survey results were used to predict the effects of changing specific school policies.

Truancy matters as a topic of youth rights for a number of reasons. First, new developments for theorizing youth in the social sciences have sponsored an interest in examining youth in light of their abilities and agency. This approach contrasts with those that categorize young people into "at-risk" or "as-risk." The newest waves of research unsettle assumptions about definitions of childhood,

the boundaries between adulthood and youth, and expose the ways in which the adult world violates the rights of legal minors. This research often questions the very ideas of childhood and youth, and focuses on youth experience, agency and culture. Rights discourses for youth and children grew in tandem with the shift in perspective of youth studies. These discourses ask broad questions such as whether youth have rights, how to define them and what system of rights can incorporate youth and children. They also explore the material application of rights in specific settings, such as the legal, medical and educational system. Within education, rights questions often revolve around access, fairness, funding and school environment. Issues such as how schools do or do not support students' rights, attention to bullying, First Amendment violations and freedom of the press are popular topics. Less attention is given to how schools, by their very structure, can abrogate youth rights to education.

Second, schools traditionally want students and their parents to exercise responsibility for student cooperation in getting an education. Parents and students, though, offer critiques to the education system that so far have not made a general impact on traditional school structure. Although schools express a certain powerlessness regarding students who misbehave or leave without permission, they still retain control over youth lives. Parents and guardians[1] find school control problematic when it comes into conflict with the ways they want to direct their children, and youth rights can clash with both.

Third, the globalization of manufacturing in the United States and the change from an industry-based to a knowledge- and service-based economy in the last 30 years disenfranchised manual labor. With so much at stake in a high school diploma, education is prized and schools' performance scrutinized. Standardized testing forms the bulk of increased measurement, with higher scores considered predictors of future college enrollment and good jobs. Teaching to improve test scores, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the growth of zero-tolerance policies in school are examples of policy driven by great

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[1] The use of the term "parents" implies biological parents. Most youth live with their parents, but others reside in foster care or kinship care. Where not explicit, "parents" in this writing is used to mean adults legally held responsible for youth care.

fears for the future. These policies overshadow examining what school experience entails for students on a day-to-day basis, which is when youth attend or avoid school. This future emphasis eclipses the question of meeting youth rights to education in the present by constructing good learning environments.

Finally, even with apparently solid educational structures, Coleman (1991) theorizes that schools have yet to catch up to the changes in family structure of the last 30-40 years, being ill-equipped to handle them. He points out that district consolidation and busing have side effects of disrupting social networks for local schools, further alienating schools from their neighborhoods, especially at higher grade levels. This alienation is one reason that schools and courts turn to punitive measures as a way of controlling chronic truancy, since adults and youth in school may have little in common outside the classroom. Many states include punitive tactics such as tying drivers' licenses to attendance, fining parents, or taking youth to court as a way to rein students back into school. Washington State's Becca Bill was enacted to enforce school and student responsibility for truancy using the courts. Periodic analyses of the Becca law's effects reveal that it is a partial success, but varies substantially at county and district levels. Still, county and district measures do not provide the detail necessary to examine how the Bill's implementation affects students in different schools. This study refines the scrutiny further by examining truancy at the school level, where conflict over rights is played out.

Research Questions

In order to investigate the above, the following research questions guided the study:

Research Question #1: To what extent do youth and adult perceptions of the use of the Becca Bill to address truancy reflect the larger debates around youth agency and rights?

To answer this question, a series of interviews provided in-depth and personal coverage of how truancy is experienced by those involved. Students at two alternative schools in Seattle, their teachers and other staff were asked about truancy and their experience of the Becca legal framework. Community workers

who facilitate school re-engagement through advocacy or social work, employees in the justice system and others engaged in anti-truancy efforts were included to obtain opinions from those involved with adhering to or enforcing the Becca laws. Parents of students with attendance problems contributed their perspective of schools and the legal process.

Research Question #2: What are the experiences of school as a place in competition with other places for early adolescents? How does awareness of the Becca Bill regarding truancy influence that experience?

Skipping school is an act of choosing one place over another. Students in the study were given disposable cameras to take pictures of important places in their lives. They were interviewed regarding their photographs, and asked about their experiences and opinions of regular and alternative schools, truancy and their knowledge of the Becca Bill.

Using the information from the interviews to inform the questions, a survey of principals in Washington State collected data on school environment. Survey data was combined with the historical truancy data and used to model the effects of those aspects of school that could influence school engagement.

Research Question #3: How are adults implicated in the experience of truancy and the laws pertaining to truancy? What insights can those who are affected by youth truancy offer?

Youth do not decide to leave school in the absence of adult interactions, they are affected by parents, teachers and other adults. This question reflects the need for multiple and intergenerational viewpoints on a matter that affects youth and adults.

Research Question #4: How does truancy vary at the school level? How has implementation of the Becca Bill varied geographically in regards to truancy?

The OSPI data provided a way to examine this question using the number of truant students per school, unlike studies that count absences. In OSPI (and survey information) analysis, count models provided a unique approach to

model the data more realistically than standard regression techniques. The contextual information measured each school's general and local environment.

Truancy matters for everyone. On a material level, the consequences for students are detrimental to their future and the effects are felt throughout society. How truancy develops and is handled exemplifies the tensions inherent in youth rights arguments, and pushes some of the limits of newer approaches to studying youth that prioritize the present over the future. Within the systems designed to reengage youth in their education, rights collide. The school environment, policies concerned with truancy and parent-school relations have a large influence on whether students stay engaged and attached to their schools.

Chapter II — Literature Review

Examining truancy as a rights issue in Washington State entails approaching the topic from the four basic categories that encompass the youth rights discourse. These aspects are commonly called the “four Ps” of children’s rights: (Alderson, 2008; John, 2003; Rodham, 1979) protection, provision, participation and power. This literature review subsumes a number of relevant literatures under their applicability to the major theme of the study, how use of the Becca Bill to address truancy reflects larger debates around youth agency and rights. First, a look at the juvenile justice system in Washington State as it pertains to truancy provides the reasons why the Becca Bill came into existence, and the concerns that surround using the courts to combat truancy as a way to protect youth. Second, youth power, their ability and rights to self-determination are a key component of the new social studies of childhood. Debates about granting youth rights often hinge on the question of their autonomy, and this section examines the arguments for and against a model of rights based on the Western autonomous individual. Because youth rights to power rest on their ability to participate in their environment, the third section examines the process of school disengagement. The role of school environment and how truancy is measured are included under provision rights, since they are critical pieces of the right to an education. Finally, a look at other research will show that this study fills a gap in the ongoing assessment of the Becca Bill’s efficacy for promoting attendance.

Protection Rights

This sections reviews literature pertaining to using the law to protect rights, socialization and using the legal system to enforce school attendance as a way of protecting youth from poor decisions. It then provides background to the Becca laws, Washington’s system of using courts to discourage truancy.

The law is a tool to insure access to adequate care and protection as basic rights (Rodham, 1979). For children, much of the discussion about protection

rights takes place in social work and focuses on the family, either as protection from abuse within the family or protection from the system designed to deal with that abuse or neglect (Lowry, 1979; Pardeck, 2002; Roberts & Evans, 2008). The United Nations' Convention on the Child (UNCRC) provides for a child's right to a family environment without specifying what that environment is (Melton, 1996), which leads social conservatives to fear that children's rights undermine the family unit and parental authority (Hafen & Hafen, 1996; Melton, 1996). Others find the family restrictive and damaging, for instance in parents' rights to physical punishment (Saunders & Goddard, 2008). Foster care is still problematic, driven as much by adult convenience as by children's needs (Rodham, 1979). Inconsistent treatment of both parents' and children's rights in placement vs. adoption (Lowry, 1979), misapplication of state's powers in placing children in foster care (Burt, 1979), and the fuzzy concept of "best interest" (Pardeck, 2002) illuminate the problems that occur within the social services system.

The ideal is that adults lead by example, socializing and providing moral guidance for their children (Böök & Perälä-Littunen, 2008). Whether parents near that ideal or not, they are held responsible as the front line of support and responsibility for raising their children (Hafen, 1977). Yet rights and law, by themselves, are not sufficient to overcome economic disparities (Veloso, 2008) or guarantee equitable distribution of resources necessary to fulfill that responsibility (Johnson, 2008).

Socialization comes under scrutiny as something coercive, something adults "do" to passive children (James & Prout, 1997). Adults are seen as responsible, competent, sexual, strong, decision making agents while children are considered irresponsible, incompetent, asexual, weak and passive (Valentine, 2000). Under this view of youth, they need protection and education, as "becoming" beings. Critiques of socialization are aimed less at parents than at institutions that govern youth "becoming" adults: psychiatry, the judicial system and education. However, socialization of some kind, to some part of society, occurs as youth age and leave the family home. Willis (1977) described how working class youth were guided towards adapting to the existing job prospects in England. Lareau (2003) explored the ways in which youth of different social

strata were trained to belong to their particular niche, whether poor or wealthy. Homeless youth are socialized to street life (Gibson, 2008).

Deconstructing socialization is a necessary step towards undoing rigidity of concepts and systems that operate as if children and youth are less than people (Ben-Arieh, 2006; Kjørholt, Lund, & Aitken, 2007; Lee, N., 1999; Valentine, 2000). This deconstruction shifts the focus from youth "becoming" to their "being," concentrating on ways that children are responsible, capable, sexual, robust and self-determining. The critique of future-oriented attitudes and behavior towards youth is that it strangles the potential of the present. It fails to recognize the ways in which children and youth are competent in the moment.

In contrast, discussions regarding truancy focus on the ways that chronic absenteeism causes long-lasting damage to youth prospects. The justice system is invoked to handle truancy as a protector, hoping to coerce children back to school when other attempts fail. Using the law to combat truancy contributes to a general rise in referrals to juvenile justice court. Zhang (2007, p. 245) found an increase of 85% between 1989 and 1998 in the use of courts to handle truancy, in spite of the lack of any research to corroborate the effectiveness of these punitive measures. Youth who are arrested early in life are also at risk for school troubles, and, conversely, chronically truant students form a "distinct group of offenders" (Zhang, D., et al., 2007, p. 244).

One response is discouraging truancy through punitive measures for students and irresponsible parents (Zhang, M., 2007). However, legal proceedings against parents of chronic absentees did not equal lower truancy in a study of 43 Local Education Agencies in the United Kingdom (Zhang, M., 2004), nor did it improve attendance for children of parents receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in California (Campbell & Wright, 2005).

Sometimes the justice system works in tandem with other social service agencies to address truancy at the community-wide level. While Kearney (2008) pointed out the disconnect between sets of professionals and the need to de-silo knowledge and theory regarding truancy, he also called for a link between school and human services to combat the effects of poverty and neglect.

Both court and social services are seen as an intrusion by the state upon the family. Donzelot (1979) called psychiatry, the judicial system and education a

"tutelary complex" that evolved in tandem with industrialization and modernity as a way for the state to enforce parental responsibility for child care, thereby avoiding questions about the effects of economic and social deprivation. John calls this complex an "army" (2003, p. 37) that views children as dangerous and elides their point of view. Bloch (2003) traces the rise of social welfare institutions in Argentina out of Protestant Christianity, as a means to push people towards approved lifestyles. Despite being at odds politically, Bloch (2003) and Hafen (1977) are both troubled by the concept of *parens patrie*, the state acting as parent, because it shifts responsibility away from family and establishes regulatory authority between schools, parents and children. Alderson (2008) critiqued the growth of Children Centers in the United Kingdom, an outcome of the 2003 Every Child Matters Act and the 2004 Children's Act that placed stringent work requirement on parents. She felt they reflected an invasive, pro-work stance towards the family and valued labor over child well being. Another objection to the use of social services is the stigma associated with them.

The institutions that constitute Donzelot's "complex" are significant components of the state. However, Harvey (2001) points out that the state is not static, its meaning and effects change over time. Education is still considered the "great equalizer" for the disenfranchised (Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009, p. 218), with its promise of an "open but hopeful future" (Thornburgh, 2006, p. 1) as the aim of American education. The question is less about the exercise of state power (or not) than about what forms that exercise takes regarding rights to education.

Using the justice system to encourage (or coerce) school attendance is one proposed solution to problems of truancy. In Washington State, this use followed a wave of reform that was, in turn, a response to an older reform of the juvenile justice system. In the 1970s, a general national trend to revamp treatment of minors in the legal system spurred Washington to rewrite its laws concerning juvenile offenders. Castellano (1986) discussed how the prior laws were driven by probation officer opinion, often inconsistent and applied unpredictably. The reform eliminated status offenses (Castellano, 1986; Eggers, 1998) and stopped the practice of locking up children who were not criminals (Ivey, 1996-1997; Pittman, J. F. & Lee, 2004). The new system under the Juvenile Justice Act of 1977 aimed for more consistency and proportionality. It moved away from the

vagaries of *parens patrie* (Eggers, 1998) with legal variables driving sentencing instead (Castellano, 1986). Status offenses did not go away, they became voluntary referrals to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) (Ivey, 1996-1997), a move that echoes Donzelot's description of the state offering advice, rather than real physical assistance. In practice, youth left the legal system before services were put in place. While this was a reform that actually happened (unlike others) (Castellano, 1986), by the 1990s serious flaws became apparent. Voluntary cooperation with Social Services did not work for status offenders, and there was little that either parents or schools could do when faced with a youth's chronic drug abuse or truancy.

The Becca Bill

A particular case catalyzed growing dissatisfaction with the legal system when a john murdered 13-year old Rebecca Hedman in 1993, while she was working as a prostitute in Spokane. Other murders had occurred in similar circumstances, but Hedman's age and family history brought this crime into the media and popular concern. She had suffered abuse in both her biological and foster homes. Everyone — principals, friends and teachers — knew that she had problems and troubling behavior but could not do anything legally to assist her or prevent her running away (Eggers, 1998).

Public opinion and vocal parents groups called for reform, and the Council of Families, Youth and Justice reviewed the 1977 changes. From this review, what are informally but generally called the "Becca" laws were proposed, argued and made into law. A significant portion of the Becca Bill ("RCW 13.32A Family reconciliation act") concerns handling runaways, addressing mental health issues and drug or alcohol abuse. It provides a way for parents to use the court to enhance and enforce their authority through Child In Need of Supervision (CHINS) and At-Risk Youth (ARY) petitions (Pittman, M. R., 1998-1999). Part of the Bill also addresses truancy.

The Bill requires schools to notify parents at the first unexcused absence and schedule a parent-school conference after two such absences. When a student reaches five unexcused absences the school *may* file a Truancy Petition. The school *must* file a Petition after 7 unexcused absences in one month or 10

unexcused absences in a year. The court will order the student to attend school, if they do not, students can be placed in detention, required to do community service, participate in a dropout prevention program or go before a community truancy board (if one exists). The court can fine parents if attendance does not improve (Pittman, M. R., 1998-1999).

Schools are also required to take action long before filing a petition. Adjusting student schedules, providing vocational services, and assisting students and families in finding necessary services for problems that affect attendance are recommended steps to take before filing (Yu, Dimock, & Anderson, June 1999). Conferences, agreements and workshops are some other options schools use to address truancy.

The hope for the Becca Bill was that early intervention in truancy would prevent skipping school from becoming a habit and that empowering parents through the ARY and CHINS petitions would allow police to detain status offenders long enough to put services in place. Others feared that the Becca Bill would violate children's rights to due process if parents could "voluntarily" admit them to inpatient care (Pittman, M. R., 1998-1999). Ivey (1996-1997) worried about extending the power of the court through follow-up on contempt violations. Chaney and Kysar (1999) questioned the pro-parent stance of the court, and whether detaining youth was a valid solution to family problems that stem from abuse or poor parenting. They found the law reinforced an authoritarian approach to status offenses, without requiring the necessary supports for that approach to work. Courts could order obedience to long lists of parent demands, for instance, without questioning whether those demands were attainable or appropriate (1999, p. 13). These criticisms were aimed most often at the system for detaining runaways and addressing drug and alcohol abuse in youth.

Chaney and Kysar (1999) were concerned about lack of student representation in the civil suits that constitute the truancy portion of the Bill and felt the law did nothing to address schools that fail to meet students' needs. Others feared that the law would prove burdensome to small school districts (Pittman, M. R., 1998-1999), or that various biases would come into play in terms

of who is filed on and who is detained (Bruch, August 1999; Zinman, August 1999).

Funding is an ongoing concern. Initially, $8.3 million was allotted over 1995-1997 for truancy programs and at-risk youth. Schools were reimbursed for filing ($3 million), alternative programs were funded ($2 million), community truancy boards were established in some areas ($1 million), and the courts received $2.3 million for the additional work the Bill would entail (Harding & Burley, 1998, p. 9). From 1997-1999, alternative school funding was reduced by $1 million and the truancy board funding disappeared (Harding & Burley, 1998, p. 9). The actual cost was closer to $14 million dollars. Counties billed (and two sued) the legislature for additional funds and won (Pittman, M. R., 1998-1999, p. 412). However, in the next biennium, funding was slashed from the $14 million to $8 million statewide (Stone, November 1999, p. 4).

The funding cuts occurred as the number of petitions climbed. Before the Becca Bill, less than a hundred truancy petitions were filed annually. From 1995 to 1997, the numbers rose from 2,203 to 15,627 and hovered around that amount through 2001. That same study estimated that about 2,664 students have stayed enrolled as a result of the Bill, at a cost of $1,314 per student (Aos, 2002, p. 2).

A review of existing literature on Becca occurs at the end of this chapter. For now, the attention shifts to questions of youth power and rights.

Power Rights and the New Sociology of Childhood

This section reviews literature concerned with new approaches to conceptualizing youth, youth power and rights, and explores the United Nations' Convention on the Child.

The last two decades saw the growth of what is often referred to as the New Social Studies of Childhood in the social sciences. Geographical studies of children and youth have embraced the new paradigm that disturbs, deconstructs and demolishes static, generalized notions of children, undermining their status as almost or unfinished adults. They take issue with old dichotomies such as the angel-or-devil child (Holloway & Valentine, 2000, p. 202), and other essentialized children: the cheap worker, the miniature adult, the citizen-in-progress or the universal child of the United Nations (Moqvist, 2003). Work in the Global South

questions whether ideas of childhood are grounded in Western hegemony (Holt & Holloway, 2006, p. 97). Horton and Kraftl (2005) wonder whether it is even or ever possible to discuss "children" or "childhood" as stable, meaningful categories.

Older models of childhood are underpinned by the assumption that children are in the process of "becoming," and should be judged, trained or treated in terms of their future potential (Wall, 2008) rather than their present circumstance, their "being." Critics say that a preoccupation with what children might be, or who adults are trying to make them become, eclipses attention on the present, negating children's current voices, abilities and needs (Ben-Arieh, 2006; Kjørholt, et al., 2007; Lee, N., 1999; Ruddick, 2006; Wall, 2008). Many ask some form of this question: if we focus on how children may become something (creative, community members, competent adults, contributing members of society, etc.) then does not that focus deny the ways in which children are already these things (Ben-Arieh, 2006)? They fear that making "adulthood" the norm and standard (Horton & Kraftl, 2005) creates children as an "other" category.

Reconceptualizing childhood is one answer to the limits imposed by older theories of childhood. The new studies call for valuing children and youth in their own right. A stated goal for researchers is to shift from measuring well-becoming to well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2006), from studying the developing child to revealing the competent child and from focusing on pedagogy to discovering children's authentic culture practiced independent of adults (Kjørholt, et al., 2007).

The child in this new approach is conceived as a rational actor with agency and decision-making ability. Within the new paradigm, children are assumed as rational, capable of acting on their own behalf, without implying that their autonomy is identical in kind or purpose as adult independence. The new view honors their particular way of interacting with and interpreting their worlds as worthwhile (Alderson, 2008; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Holt & Holloway, 2006; John, 2003). This approach counters adult systems that treat children and youth as passive, vulnerable, immature and ignorant (Alderson, 2008; John, 2003; Kjørholt, et al., 2007).

However, the implications of these new assumptions are not explored much within geography. The subfield is not one with researchers and theorizers on multiple sides of an argument. For instance, although Aries' pioneering (1962) work on the construction of childhood forms the springboard for the current philosophy on childhood, geographers have paid little attention to his critics. Ormé (1995) and Hanawalt's (1989) detailed studies of medieval social life and death contain evidence that conceptions of childhood existed. The artwork Aries analyzed in developing his theory could be interpreted differently (Koops, 2004), or forms an inadequate and sparse method for his conclusions (Ormé, 2001). Alderson (Alderson, 2008) (and others) criticize Piaget for developmental theories of childhood that measure children by rigid development schema and push them to normality. But supporters of Piaget critique the postmodern turn in general for its misinterpreting age as sequence, or for seeing infant brains in adult terms (Lourenço & Machado, 1996).

Instead, this new approach may be what Vanderbeck (2008, p. 394) calls "consensus based research." King feared that criticism of the new image of the child is seen as anti-child or anti-children's rights (2007). Some scholars are beginning to call for more discussion and critical debate, since the new assumptions prove as problematic as the old ones. Valentine (2003) warns against essentializing the autonomous, rational child or making that vision of childhood the new fetish. Without debate, issues that arise from a political, theoretical or empirical application of the new sociology will not be treated to the critical review necessary to develop sound policies, theories or practices (Vanderbeck, 2008).

The rise of newer approaches to studying children is intertwined with the development of theories concerning children's rights (King, 2007). While a lack of debate in the social sciences will stagnate children's geography (Vanderbeck, 2008), it has broader implications for children's rights, a field not deficient of arguments. If, as John (2003) suggests, we treat children "as if" they were people, then they must have rights as people. This leads to questions of how we define rights, who can claim them, and what those rights are. Rights are a form of power for adults (Roche, 1999) and youth rights are a challenge to that power.

One predominant set of arguments stems from the Western tradition of basing rights on claims of individual autonomy. The Kantian, liberal tradition conceives of rights as the legal ability to act independently and pursue one's own self-interest. The precondition for this autonomy is rationality, and the ability to make informed decisions (Wall, 2008). Historically, rights were denied to certain groups (non-whites and women, for example) on the grounds that members were not capable of thinking rationally. That assumption was challenged as a way of claiming equal rights (Wall, 2008). Rights can also be considered as the justification for making a claim, rather than the claim itself (Greene, M., 1979), so that failure to claim rights does not negate them.

Under this definition, then, if rights are granted to people as autonomous, rational human beings, and children are conceived as autonomous, rational human beings, then they deserve the rights that adults have. Conversely, the ability for children to have rights under this scheme means they must be redrawn as autonomous, rational human beings. Interim arguments about whether to create special rights for children, or revise adult rights (Rodham, 1979) are sidestepped because ultimately this line of reasoning concludes that adult rights be extended to children. This is the stand that liberationist ideology (Pardeck, 2002; Purdy, 1992) takes, calling for the removal of all age based distinctions between adults and children. If children are competent and able to participate, then liberationists argue that they do not need special protection (Lowden, 2002), and that minors deserve all adult rights. This ideology is an extreme position, but follows logically upon conceiving children as autonomous, rational human beings.

Several sources criticize this vision of the child. First, those who espouse more socially conservative views worry about the state encroaching on what they consider family scope of authority. They fear that entangling parents and children in a relation with the state undermines parental authority (Hafen, 1977; Hafen & Hafen, 1996). They support the social contract that says parents have obligations towards and authority over youth while youth can expect protection and support from their families.

Within geography, Ruddick is uneasy with the Kantian basis for claiming rights. The child as rights-holder pushes the "limit" of liberalism precisely

because it challenges ideas of autonomous individuals (Ruddick, 2007b, p. 628). The independent, self-realizing individual is not a universal construct, but the legacy of a number of strains of philosophy in Western history. Kant's emphasis on strong autonomy with its prerequisites reason and wisdom (Alderson, 2008), Rousseau's ideas of children's essential goodness (Purdy, 1992; Wall, 2008) and Calvin's stress on independence and self-reliance (Pardeck, 2002) merge as one model of rights.

Those uncomfortable with repealing compulsory education, eliminating legal drinking, voting or driving ages turn to a different basis for rights. Other models exist, grounded less in the ability to perform than on interests and needs, which everyone has from infancy forward (Wall, 2008). Rather than intellect, claims to rights are based on human beings as social creatures. Alderson (2008) uses Mill's definition of weak autonomy as a basis for rights. Weak autonomy is, in part, the ability to cope with risk and stand by one's mistakes. These rights are based in views that stress community, participation and relations (Pardeck, 2002; Roche, 1999; Wall, 2008), they do not exist in isolation. One group's rights can threaten others' rights (Ruddick, 2006), and they are continually contested and defined within society.

Who has authority to claim rights, especially children's rights, is still debated. Children's rights as such are often argued for and articulated by adults (Rodham, 1979). Melton accuses adult special interest advocates of framing their issues in terms of children's rights as a way of making their position impervious to critique and discussion (1996, p. 1235). This implies that children's rights have more to do with adult agendas than with what youth consider important.

While the deconstruction of the idea of childhood makes questions of age appear less important, in the sense of rigidly determined developmental stages, it paradoxically makes the question of age more pertinent. Are rights for infants the same as rights for 17-year olds? How do we begin to conceptualize implementing rights for the wide variety of physical, mental and emotional existence that constitutes children and youth? If rights are based on the Western model, what rights can an infant have? If based on the community-social model, how can we negotiate adults' and adolescents' competing claims?

United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child

One approach is the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. Originally proposed by Poland in 1979 as a way to celebrate the 1979 International Year of the Child (Cohen, Cynthia Price, 2006; Cohen, C. P. & Naimark, 1991), the UNCRC took 10 years to write. Eighty nations contributed to its development with substantial input from the United States (Cohen, Cynthia Price, 2006, p. 188). The U.N. General Assembly adopted it in 1989. Since then, all but two nations have ratified the Convention.

Critics of the UNCRC fault it for promoting a Western-based, universal childhood model (Murphy-Berman, Levesque, & Berman, 1996; UNICEF, 1992), for threatening the family (Hafen & Hafen, 1996), for reflecting neoliberal world-views (Nieuwenhuys, 2008) and for lacking strong methods to ensure its implementation. Conversely, it is praised for not essentializing the child, for recognizing family as a construct beyond the nuclear two-parent model, for allowing localization in its interpretation and enforcement (Cohen, C. P. & Naimark, 1991).

One positive aspect of the UNCRC is its flexibility for implementing children's rights, a point that gets lost in the theoretical debates. Greene (1979) speaks against abstracting children rights, since children are embedded in material interactions that are affected by the outcome of rights' debates. Much of what are thought of as rights, legally, are an effort to make protecting and caring for children a legal matter (Rodham, 1979). But these are only two of the "4 Ps," which often sort along two axes, protection and provision forming one, power and participation the other (John, 2003).

Much recent research focuses on power and participation. John (2003) questions whether the current interest indicates a "crisis of childhood" or signals a shift in power relations, since recognizing children as competent social actors means revising and rethinking existing institutions, something that the UNCRC addresses in its Articles (Murphy-Berman, et al., 1996). Theoretical work (Kjørholt, et al., 2007; Lund, 2007; Murphy-Berman, et al., 1996; Wall, 2008) is bolstered by other studies that examine children's agency in the public sphere. Researchers have studied what youth participation means in school and civic

councils in the UK (Wyness & 2009), in Brazilian culture (Veloso, 2008), Indian youth workers organizing for education (John, 2003), environmental awareness and action (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008) and participation in the judicial systems (Lee, N., 1999; Roberts & Evans, 2008). Often, adults and a culture based on adults as the norm serve to limit the ability and scope of youth participation (Eriksson & Näsman, 2008; Lund, 2007), as becomes evident when the legal system encounters children, whose dual status as "being" and "becoming" undermines institutional efficiency (Lee, N., 1999).

Much of the research on youth and children, especially following implementation of the UNCRC, occurs outside the Unites States. Citizenship and participation have been examined in Brazil (Veloso, 2008), the UK (Roche, 1999; Wyness & 2009) and India (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2004). Growing up and youth contribution to family economies were explored in the Himalayas (Dyson, 2006) and the Sudan (Katz, 2004). Panter-Brick (2004) detailed the problems encountered by "street children" in developing countries. The position of children in developed countries has been discussed in the UK (Alderson, 2008; Freeman, 1981; Gill & McNeish, 2006; Horton & Kraftl, 2005; Lee, N., 1999) and Scandinavian countries (Kjørholt, 2007; Kjørholt, et al., 2007; Nieuwenhuys, 2008).

Research on youth conducted in the United States is problematic in its relationship to youth rights since the UNCRC was not ratified here. There is no real discussion or awareness of the UNCRC in the U.S., and such a discussion would reveal the philosophical divide between child liberationists and child savers (Melton, 1996, p. 1235), camps that could roughly be divided into participation/power proponents and protection/provision advocates. The U.S. also has no formal family policy, unlike many developed and developing countries (Wilson, W. J., 1996). There is no overarching, institutional framework that promotes discussion or exercise of youth rights, no U.S.A. version of the UNCRC, no children's councils as exist in the U.K. Yet, like other countries, we worry about children's health, welfare, education, employment, location and outcome. Perennial debates concern how much freedom of thought, religion and expression are allowable for youth and children.

A general idea of rights to free speech is argued and decided on a case-by-case basis, often through the youth branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The ACLU argues for youth in cases involving freedom of the press for school newspapers, peaceful political protest (Pendergrass, 2010) and against search and seizure in drug sweeps (ACLU, 2010; Ito, 2010). The lawsuits center on rights to citizenship and public participation, but those are not the only forms of participation open to youth. The next section discusses participation in terms of schooling and attendance.

Participation Rights

Youth participation is often envisioned as young people's ability to influence policy or institutions with their opinion. For this study, "participation" is interpreted loosely to mean the ways in which youth interact in the education process, the methods and reasons for inviting, coercing or avoiding that engagement. This section discusses the literature on student disengagement, truants, and measures of truancy/dropout as measures of participation.

As Kjørholt points out. "What children's and adults' worlds are; and what can, does, should and should not pass between them is central to academic research into children's worlds, particularly social science and humanities-based work. This basic question is not debated that much" (p. 196).

One place children's and adult's worlds intersect is school, an admittedly "becoming"-heavy site. In the United States, this means examining the public school system. The majority of youth pass through public schools, since home-schooling accounts for only 2.2% of families nationwide (Princiotta, Bielick, & Chapman, 2004), and private schools for grades K-12 (in 2010) held 11.7% of school-age youth (NCES, 2011)

Every day, in public schools, students are absent without permission — they are truant. They refuse participation in the education system, sometimes with parent approval, often without. Some consider any unexcused absence an instance of truancy, or it may be defined as a pattern or habit of absence (Zhang, D., et al., 2007). Truancy definitions reflect the power dynamic between student, school and home. Parents disagree with schools over what seem reasonable withdrawals for travel or family matters. But school policies determine which

absences are excused or not, and the phrase "unexcused absence" is the current definition of truancy.

Measuring Truancy and Dropout

Unfortunately, that definition is an imprecise measure. Truancy studies are lagging in comparison to school dropout research, which developed a lively argument in the last 10 – 15 years over how to properly measure this important statistic.

Part of that argument includes who counts as a high school graduate or dropout. Is there a distinction made between someone who earns a diploma from a regular public school, someone who earns some form of an alternative diploma and someone who earns a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) some years after high school (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007; Swanson, 2006)? Sources of graduation and dropout statistics sway the numbers. Those using the Common Core of Data (CCD) (Greene, J. P., 2002; Swanson, 2006) find lower graduation rates, especially for minorities, than those who rely on the Current Population Survey (CPS) and Census data (Mishel & Roy, 2006). Warren and Halpern-Manners (2009) compared the CCD and CPS, finding a 15% discrepancy between the reported graduation percent (90% using the CPS and 75% using the CCD). Heckman and LaFontaine combined the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), household surveys, school administrative data and results from longitudinal studies to resolve the 22% discrepancy they found in reported rates (2007, p. 3).

Who is included or excluded? Warren and Halpern-Manners (2009) say that half the difference in dropout rates is based on whether private school and G.E.D. attainment is included or not, since their inclusion causes rates to rise. Greene excluded these categories in two large studies since the G.E.D. can reflect the influence of a particular school (2002). Looking beneath the total numbers, whether prison populations are counted (or not, as in the CPS) greatly affects African-American male graduation rates (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007). Mishel and Roy (2006, p. 287) think that the CPS overstates rates by excluding prisoners, but that the overstatement is offset by the understatement produced by excluding military personnel. However, a German study of American dropout

rates found that the military was too small a portion of the population to have any significant affect (Heckman & LaFontaine, 2007).

What counts as dropping out? Event rates that measure the number of students who drop out in a year try to capture what is a multiyear process (Greene, J. P., 2002; Swanson, 2006). Status measures count youth in a given age range who are neither in school nor possessing a diploma and/or G.E.D. Swanson (2006) mentions cross-sectional measures as a way to capture changes in youth populations. All measures suffer from lack of precision because they do not capture mobility, 9th grade retainment (Greene, J. P., 2002), or reporting bias from youth and school districts (Greene, J. P., 2002; Warren & Halpern-Manners, 2009). Warren and Halpern-Manners (2009) found that simulating the estimated completion rate showed the least bias, and could be enhanced to account for international migration and race/ethnicity.

Problems with heterogeneity make graduation statistics incommensurable between states, which vary in how they calculate graduation rates, set graduation standards, provide alternative credentials, and in reporting and record keeping (Swanson, 2006). Using the national datasets, however, outcomes still disagree. Greene found a national graduation rate of 71% in 1998 (2002, p. 2), with high variation from Iowa at 93% to Georgia at 54% (2002, p. 12). Mishel and Roy (2006, p. 292) calculated graduation rates using the 2000 Decennial Census, and found a graduation rate of 83%. Rates for whites hover around 80% (± 2%) (Greene, J. P., 2002, p. 3; Warren & Halpern-Manners, 2009, p. 22), but rates for minorities are contested. Greene (2002, p. 3) found a 56% graduation rate for African Americans, Warren and Halpern-Manners (2009, p. 22) found 62.3%, Heckman and LaFontaine (2007, p. 3) found around 65%, while Mishel and Roy (2006, p. 4) said that 75% of minorities graduate (although they included all minorities, not just Black and Hispanic).

Those who measure trends in high school dropout prognosticate differently. Rumberger (2001, p. 2) found 2.8% fewer dropouts between the early 1970s and 1998. In contrast, Heckman and LaFontaine (2007, p. 19) measure a 4-5% drop in graduation rates over the last 40 years, a decline at a time when the importance of completing high school as an entry to work increased. Greene (2002) found a flat graduation rate for decades.

The point is not to agree with using one dataset or the other, or even to try to tack down a definition of dropout measure, but to show that measurement and discussion of dropout rates became more sophisticated over the past few decades, a sophistication lacking in truancy measures. An indication of the focus on graduation is the U.S. Department of Education's annual publication of dropout rates. No similar publications exist for truancy, school refusal or school anxiety. Since measurement can determine which indicators receive attention (Levitas, 1999), a common definition is crucial for attempts to quantify social phenomena, especially truancy.

Defining Truancy

Regardless of systems to categorize truants, truancy's inconsistent definition is bound up with the difficulty of tracking (Kearney, 2008) and trying to find patterns in already poor recordkeeping (NCES, N.d.). No uniform standard exists either in the United States (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001; Sheldon, 2009; Southwell, 2006) or Britain (Davies & Lee, 2006). Does being late to school or class count as truancy? Is it skipping classes, part of the day, all day or many days? When truancy segues into dropping out, especially for students aged 16 and above (Kearney, 2008), it makes tracking even trickier. Yet lack of a standard definition in general has not stemmed discussion of the issue.

In their review of truancy studies, Lyon and Cotler (2007) found authors used anywhere from 10% to 40% nonattendance to describe truancy. Zhang (2007) used a general definition of habitual absence to mean truancy, but others use their own cutoffs. Eggers (1998) used a half-day absence in a study of female offenders, Stover (2005) used 5 unexcused absences per semester. Henry (2007b) used a measure of a full day's absence in the prior 4 weeks. Kearney (2008) counted a full day's absence and implied that 10 or more absences constituted chronic truancy, while DeSocio et al. (2007) used 15 or more absences in a year as chronic truancy. Hunt and Hopko (2009) took all unexcused absences for the entire school year in their study of rural Appalachian absenteeism, and Hendricks et al. (2010) counted those with less than 90% attendance in an evaluation of court interventions.

Some attempts at definition are questionable. Attwood simply asked students if they had skipped school "never, once or twice, several time or often" (2006, p. 471). Butler (2006) measured using "yes" or "no," although the study was of student health behavior, not truancy. These kinds of measure have the disadvantage of grouping those with sporadic skipping in with students who have multiple absences.

Finally, many talk about truancy without really defining it. Those examining truancy from the perspective of the justice system, Zhang (2007), Waddington (1997), and Campbell (2005), do not care about the criteria for reaching court, only that youth are in the system. But others with lengthy research into the social exclusion aspect of truancy (MacDonald & Marsh, 2004), trying to find useful categories (Kearney & Albano, 2004), discussing evidence of unmet learning needs (Southwell, 2006) or interviewing truants for their opinions (Davies & Lee, 2006) give no indication of what they mean by truancy.

One way to examine the definition is from the school's point of view, in that an unexcused absence is whatever the school defines it as. This perspective has its share of problems. Parents condone absences that schools do not (Attwood & Croll, 2006). The presence of a note often counts as an excused absence and lack of a note an unexcused one, but a family crisis such as parent unemployment or illness (Gottfredson, Gerstenblith, Soule, Womer, & Lu, 2004), or a family holiday (Wilson, V., Malcolm, Edward, & Davidson, 2008) are not counted as valid reasons to miss school. Reid (2005) pointed out that some schools view parent-condoned absences or skipping classes as truancy, others do not.

One problem with these definitions is they do not incorporate any sense of frequency or timing, instead they indicate the potential power struggle between school and parents for youth attention. In addition, school districts track partial-day absences inconsistently, sometimes tracking them as full day and sometimes not (Kearney, 2008).

Another approach distinguishes between definitions that imply an etiology for the absence and agnostic descriptions of behavior (Egger, Costello, & Angold, 2003, p. 804). Reid (2005) provided a inventory of sorts in his survey of the truancy literature, starting with his own definition of truants as "pupils

missing school for 65% or more in the school year," a measure that appears clear-cut and a-theoretical but excludes many who would be considered truant by school personnel. Stoll's (1990) definition of truancy as "being absent from school for no legitimate reason" (in Reid, 2005, p. 60) begs the question of what defines a legitimate reason. Later, Atkinson (2000, in Reid, 2005) distinguished between minor, occasional absences from a class and ones that stretch into days, weeks or longer leaving possible gray areas in what should be a simpler measure. Wilson (2008) also makes a distinction between short, occasional absence and habitual school refusal. Malcolm et al. (2006) described truancy three ways: first, as absences the students know are unacceptable to the school authorities and parents; second, as absences that students feel are legitimate but not accepted by the school and, third, parentally condoned absences (also unacceptable to school authorities). While these are useful distinctions, once again the question of what is legitimate or not is problematic.

Defining truancy in agnostic terms, by classes or days missed, also has difficulties. Although schools often consider a student truant after he or she has accumulated some number of unexcused absences (often 10 full days), when those days are missed is critical. Kearney (2008) outlined scenarios of days missed that would never generate concern. High bars for missed days can mean that a child does not receive prompt attention at the start of a pattern of truancy.

One potentially useful model ranks absences starting with parental withdrawal from school (for help at home or other family reasons), and then moves to school refusal, school phobia and full-blown chronic truancy (Kearney, 2003). Kearney's approach allows researchers to place particular behavior patterns such as morning tardiness and weeks-long absence under the same umbrella without making them equivalent.

Terminology and definitions are critical to assessment. Lyon (2007) found that under different criteria, truancy could be estimated at anywhere between 5% to 28% - a huge gap. Measuring truancy tends to occur retrospectively, as part of psychiatric studies. A focused study by Egger et al. (2003, p. 799) distinguished between school anxiety based absence (2% of all students) and more general truants (6.2%). Kearney and Albano (2004, p. 150) found a 37.2% truancy rate in an outpatient sample, but that says little about the general student population.

Kearney (2008) reported that Guare and Cooper (2003) found 54.6% of students skipped class occasionally and 13.1% often did for an overall truancy rate of 9.1%. These variations indicate that there is still no general way to measure and discuss truancy, in spite of decades of concern over those who reject or rebel against the public school system.

Characteristic of Students Who Skip School

The focus on truancy is often on truants themselves. One early measure of absent students is the difference between those who avoid school due to anxiety and those who simply refuse to attend. Egger et al. (2003) examined difference between anxious school refusal and truancy in light of psychological disorders, and found that while some youth were clearly in one camp or the other, many overlapped. School anxiety, or anxious refusal, is marked by depression and separation anxiety; students want to stay home. School refusers were depressed and showed signs of conduct disorder. Lyon and Cotler (2007) criticized this division between school avoidance and school refusal, as the distinction makes one type (avoidance) more sympathetic while encouraging a view of school refusal as deviant. At the time, they found few studies that were less than 90% white, and criticized the use of restricted samples in the research. Pilkington (1991) also objected to the avoidance/refusal dichotomy, with its emphasis on the child and family that ignores school characteristics and factors outside the family affecting school engagement. Kearney (2004) used a functional approach to the psychological categorization of truancy. He recommended a continuum ranging from anxiety based to refusal. Similarly, Reid (Reid, 2008) classified truants as those who do not like school, those with psychological problems, and those with problems and challenges at home. Pilkington quoted Klein and Last (1989), who wanted "all potentially noxious and/or anxiety producing aspects of a child's school experience" included when considering any student's absences (1991, p. 298).

Those "noxious and/or anxiety producing aspects" of school experience are one set of proposed reasons behind school refusal and avoidance. Kearney (2004, p.149) found that younger students skip school to "(a) avoid school-related stimuli that provoke a general sense of negative affectivity" and/or "escape

school-related aversive social and/or evaluative situations." Older students skipped school in order to "gain attention from significant others" such as parents or peers, and to "pursue tangible reinforcement outside of school" in the form of shopping, playing with friends, or using drugs. Attwood & Croll (2006) distinguished between risk factors and precipitating events, since not all at-risk students skip school. They found that changing schools, being suspended, having health issues and avoiding bullying were the major factors for some students, while others went missing due to poor relations with their teachers and an overall stressful school atmosphere.

McCray (2006) argues that truancy is often an indicator of bigger issues in a student's life, which ties in with Spenser's approach that sees school absence as a possible indicator of unmet needs. Spenser (2009), in an in-depth look at 42 8th graders, found clear signs of physical and mental/emotional needs that were never addressed, despite their ongoing absences. Inadequate identification of special education needs leaves some students overwhelmed and unable to succeed (NCES, 2011). Unattended literacy and numeracy learning delays or disabilities lead to some students disliking school (Reid, 2008).

Chronic absentees have poor academic performance (Hunt & R., 2009; McCray, 2006; NCES, 2011; Zhang, M., 2007), are often involved with drug and alcohol abuse and show poor social abilities (Hunt & Hopko, 2009; Kearney, 2008; Reid, 2008; Zhang, D., et al., 2007). As a group, they lack the vision of education as a way to achieve goals in life, and often have mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Egger, et al., 2003; Zhang, D., et al., 2007), physical ill health or risky health behaviors (Hunt & R., 2009; Kearney, 2008; Reid, 2008).

Egger and Kearney disagree with this gloomy assessment. Egger (2003, p. 804) found that although the three types of truants (pure anxiety-based, pure refusers and mixed) were strongly associated with mental health problems, 75% of the "pure" types did not meet the criteria for diagnosis, while 88% of the mixed types did. Kearney found roughly a third of the students in his earlier study had no diagnostic category, others avoided school for mixed reasons, and many had no other problem behavior aside from school refusal (2008, p. 457), although he indicated they had earlier childhood problems.

Poor health and family situations also figure in the literature. Just as parents' involvement in school is linked to academic achievement (Kearney, 2008), lack of interest is linked to academic failure, especially when parents condone student absences (Kearney, 2008; Reid, 2008). When children experience abuse and neglect, or have ongoing physical health problems (such as asthma) they find school success elusive and difficult (NCES, 2011; Sheldon, 2009). Anxiety and refusal types of absenteeism are associated with single parents (Egger, et al., 2003). Chronic truants may have parents who use and abuse drugs and alcohol (Zhang, D., et al., 2007) or who have mental and emotional problems (Egger, et al., 2003). Poor family cohesion, with parents who are isolated or a conflicted family life (Kearney, 2008) can interfere with adequate parent support of education. Reid (Reid, 2008) found a lack of support for homework, poor home to school communication and a lack of sleep were factors in truancy considered to be under parental jurisdiction. Finally, parents contribute to truancy by not supervising properly (Egger, et al., 2003; Reid, 2008) so that the "free time" after school (Henry, 2007b) is a factor in truancy. Higher parent education correlated with fewer absences, as did family participation in religious activities (Henry, 2007b; Hunt & R., 2009).

The emphasis on individual student characteristics and family context feeds into school staff making assumptions about particular students and their families being "good" or "bad" (Bowditch, 1993; Duncan, 1999; Southwell, 2006). Teachers often see parents' attitudes and the home environment as reasons for student truancy (Davies & Lee, 2006, p. 203). "Good" families, preferably with two-parents, are invested in their kids' education and "good" children are mannerly, cooperative and obedient. Normative images and favored treatment of "good" students and "good" families can bifurcate incoming cohorts (Willis, 1977), initiating a process that isolates those who less resemble those ideals.

As tempting as it is to assign "bad kids" to "bad families," Davies and Lee (2006) found no evidence of anti-school attitude in their interviews with parents. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) lists family health and financial concerns among reasons for unexcused absences, as students forgo education to help with family matters. Egger et al. (2003) found that "pure"

truancy (not associated with anxiety or depression) was associated with poverty, a family stressor that correlates with many difficult family situations. Kearny (2008) called for more empirical research on the effects of child self-care, divorce, maltreatment, foster care and difficult neighborhoods upon school engagement since they are factors that are outside both school and student direct control.

Sheldon (2009) reported on the generational persistence of truancy and its link to social and economic deprivation. Poverty alone is not an explanation, as Sheldon found some poor areas had much higher attendance than other, similar neighborhoods. Still, single-parent families, mobility and stressful or dangerous neighborhoods (Kearney, 2008; NCES, 2011) make school engagement more difficult when youth experience the multiple family and neighborhood risks associated with poverty. Noguera (2000) pointed out that well-off youth perform better than poor children, that a focus on students and families distracts from examining the economic conditions of education.

Those conditions, and the conditions within school, are the subject of the next section. School is a place where most American youth experience some form of conscious or unconscious performance of rights. Without drawing a sharp line, given interdependencies, there are at least two groupings of rights issues at the personal and institutional levels. For individual students, rights around expression, free speech, assembly or protest, protection against unreasonable searches and rights to their own sexuality are contested and reworked with the assistance or hindrance of adults. At the institutional level, questions of funding, resource quality, teacher experience, building adequacy and administrative talent underpin discussions of the right to education. How schooling is implemented varies, and the quality of education available is mediated by gender, urban/rural differences, language barriers and disability (Zinga & Young, 2008). These variations and their effect on school engagement are aspects of provision rights for youth.

Provision Rights

Regardless of who is coming in the door, or where they come from, schools can help or hurt the degree of students engagement and attachment. Safety, teachers, policies, school climate, academics and the current of issues

around authority and control permeate the ways in which students learn not to care about school.

Part of the general critique of developmental discourses is targeted at schools. They come under fire for assuming that children are immature and in need of education to become fully participating citizens (Kjørholt, et al., 2007). School authorities routinely make decisions about youth without acknowledging their right to participate or including them in the process (Alderson, 2008). Winnicott (1965) objected to the way that children enter by age, rather than individual readiness. John (2003, p. 37) accused schools of seeing children as "dangerous," and being part of the forces that act to socialize them. Schools are criticized as enormously adult institutions requiring generalizability to function well, when children are not a good fit for generalizing (Lee, N., 1999).

Outside of the new social studies of childhood concerns about school take the form of periodic moral panics. From the publication of the Coleman Report in 1966, through "A Nation at Risk" in 1983, to the wrangling over the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools are held responsible when youth fail to assimilate in society. Critics of schools cite institutional cultures resistant to change (Fine, 1997), teacher disempowerment that breeds student disempowerment (Fine, 1997; McNeely & Falci, 2004), high stakes testing (Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2004) and a focus on the personal — families, students, "troublemakers" (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1997) — that ignores the very real funding differences between different districts (Kozol, 2005; Noguera & Akom, 2000; Zinga & Young, 2008).

Schools are fertile ground to examine rights questions for youth. These questions are important because in this culture, at this time, school is the main conduit to a self-sufficient adulthood. Unlike other eras, when children were active members of the household (although holding fewer rights than now) (Zelizer, 1985), when youth could apprentice and learn by doing or migrate to find work (Alderson, 2008), the economic changes of the last fifty years preclude these options for most, so that a diploma is seen as the minimum critical credential for entry into successful adult life.

When the public school system works, students exit with a High School Diploma, presumably prepared for college. But the common school model, with

its assumptions of age-grading and reliance on an outdated family model (Coleman, 1991) often fails to graduate. Even the phrase "dropout" implies an event, an occurrence, when disengaging from school is a process that occurs over time (Henry, 2007b; Hirschman, Pharris-Ciurej, & Willhoft, 2006) and at different ages.

Causes and consequences of Truancy

Leaving school without a diploma correlates with a host of difficulties for the youth in question and society in general. Poorer employment opportunities and health outcomes lead to increased demand on social services (Bazemore, Stinchcomb, & Leip, 2004; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Henry, 2007b). These in turn imply less political participation and less intergenerational mobility (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Rumberger, 1987). A process that often starts in early adolescence has ramifications for the entire life course.

Depending on how graduation is measured, overall graduation rates vary from 75% - 90% (Warren & Halpern-Manners, 2009). These rates represent an improvement from graduation rates of thirty years ago (Rumberger, 1987), but indicate that even if school is "the" place to be, it remains a difficult environment for a significant number of youth.

Using data from 1985, Reglin (1997) asserted a link between truancy and dropout, since Florida was, at the time, 5th in rank for teens out of school with a dropout rate 2.6% higher than the national rate (11.9 vs. 9.3%). His assertion made its way into the literature without a demonstrated link, but others have since found coincidence of high chronic truancy and high dropout rates for schools (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, 2002). For those who say they drop out of school due to school factors, Stearns and Glennie (2006) found the highest category to be due to poor grades, a possible outcome of skipping classes.

Although youth skipping classes are likely in the moment, on the "being" plane, the consequences for students who miss school fall squarely in the "becoming" camp. Continued absence from schools makes it difficult to keep up academically, and youth fall behind their peers, missing educational milestones (Lyon & Cotler, 2007; McCray, 2006; Reid, 2008; Zhang, M., 2007). In their report,

"Silent Epidemic" (2006), Bridgeland et al. found that 59-65% of the students in their study missed classes the year before dropping out (p. 7), with 43% of students missing too much schoolwork to catch up (p. 3). Truancy increases the odds that they eventually drop out of school altogether (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Hirschman, et al., 2006; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Zhang, M., 2007). Lack of education puts youth at risk for loss of future wages (McCray, 2006; Reid, 2008). While the truants in Wilson and Malcom's interviews (Wilson, V., et al., 2008) had mixed opinions on whether their absences affected their academics, researchers agree that academics influence truancy. Kearney (2008) cited a number of studies showing that one cause of disaffection is the curriculum not being tailored to students' needs and interests. Reid (2008) said that much truancy is skipping one or more particular classes within the school day. Students in schools with multiple tracks that incorporate vocational interests have higher likelihood of graduation (Henry, 2007b).

Yet Attwood and Croll (2006) were surprised at the positive review of curriculum given by truant students. Davies and Lee (2006) found that although educational professionals and literature placed curriculum very high on the list of factors in disengagement, the students he interviewed did not, although they expressed desires for more practical and vocational courses. Parents in Davies and Lee's study felt that the curriculum was not at fault, but that poor school to parent relations contributed to their children's dislike of school and that bullying or problems with peers and teachers were most important. Youth echoed this assessment. While Davies and Lee were cautious enough to say that part of school's mission is to broaden students' horizons and not simply implement "practical courses" (p. 9) they did point out that a homogenous curriculum for all students is not the most helpful course to take.

Beyond academics, classroom experience is important. Poor relations with teachers and staff are a significant aspect of truancy (Hallinan, 2008). These poor relations take the form of lack of respect for student or attention to their diverse cultural backgrounds and needs (Kearney, 2008; NCES, 2011; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991; Reid, 2008). If students feel unsupported, it affects their school attachment (Hallinan, 2008). While others simply list "poor relations," Reid (2008) also itemized

unreliable staff as a cause for disliking school. High staff turnover can lead to disengaged teachers, and the lack of interest and support affects the students.

Pilkington (1991) found that contentious relations contributed to the desire to skip classes. Teachers created lose/lose situations with students by bullying or humiliating them, whether or not the students tried to behave. Other bad relations consist of students feeling unknown or singled out for negative attention (Ozer, Emily J., Wolfe, & Kong, 2008). Low expectations (Davies & Lee, 2006) or a failure to recognize student effort contribute to classroom alienation (Ozer, Emily J., et al., 2008). The obverse applies, too. Supportive teachers have a strong influence on school attachment (Hallinan, 2008). Ozer (2008, p. 451) found that students respected teachers who had "good teaching skills" and "demonstrated commitment to student learning." Noguera's (2007) students respected teachers who were prepared, versatile in their approach, patient and firm.

Outside the classroom, school policy response to misbehavior is often authoritarian and punitive. Skiba and Peterson (2000) examined the effects of the increase in "zero tolerance" policies to fill a gap in research on its effectiveness. Punitive policies were often used in favor of in-school attention or prevention, and offered symbolic value that had little to do with reengaging youth. They found that discipline was unfairly applied to poorer students and racial or ethnic minorities. Pellerin's study of school engagement (2005) demonstrated that indifferent and authoritarian school climates had the worst levels of school attachment. Although schools believe suspension is a way to get parents' attention (Bowditch, 1993), it contributes to severing ties between student and school and is tied to dropout and truancy (Zhang, D., et al., 2007). As Willis observed in his work with English working-class "lads," students began their terms ready to participate and attend, but became disillusioned and disengaged from school through the disciplinary process (1977). In contrast, Reeves followed a Minnesota school district that decoupled grades and attendance despite criticism from teachers. Unexcused absences fell by 42%, disciplinary references by 64% and suspensions by 37% (2008, p. 90). Rigid rules, that do not take student situations into account, are a factor in truancy and dropping out of school (Bowditch, 1993, p. 498).

School policies concerning attendance affect truancy. Zhang (Zhang, D., et al., 2007) noted that larger schools have larger truancy problems. This is partly due to the difficulties of information management in larger schools (Kearney, 2008; NCES, 2011; Reid, 2005). Inadequate or inconsistent attendance policies delay or prevent parent notification. How schools handle unexcused absences also affects whether students can reengage with school or not. Kearney (2008) noted that rigid rules and disciplinary practices, especially around returning to school, adversely affected truants' ability to reengage. Suspending students for truancy or prescribing automatic "F" grades for students who miss many classes are pushout policies (Stearns & Glennie, 2006; Zhang, D., et al., 2007) that encourage youth to leave school early. Less obviously, policies that assign misbehaving students to more remedial classes mean that teaching resources are reserved for more conforming, "brighter" students (Fine, 1997; MacDonald & Marsh, 2004), equating misbehavior with lack of intelligence.

The UNCRC stipulates that children have a right to a safe school environment (Ruck & Horn, 2008). Kozol (2005) vilified the New York City public schools for their inattention to physical safety, their leaky or broken windows, antiquated heating and cooling systems and lack of recess. Chronic maintenance issues contribute to school disengagement (NCES, 2011).

Dangerous school environments also create disaffection for school (Egger, et al., 2003; Henry, 2007b). When small infractions such as rumors, pushing or bullying go unaddressed, they tend to escalate to more violent and criminal acts (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). School that tolerate bullying (Egger, et al., 2003; MacDonald & Marsh, 2004; NCES, 2011; Reid, 2008), where discipline is ineffective (NCES, 2011; Wilson, V., et al., 2008) or general safety issues within or en route to school (Reid, 2008) give students more reasons to dislike school.

While these are valid reasons for youth to want to avoid school, the impact of accumulated absences affects the community, the school, families and, not least, the student. Other students lose class time when the absentee returns, and teachers take time out of class to catch up the returning student (Wilson, V., et al., 2008). Schools that try to manage truancy find the effort costly, complex and time-consuming (Reid, 2008). Kearney (2008) linked truancy to dropping out of school with the later effects of economic deprivation, marital, social and

psychological problems in later adulthood. Chronically absent youth often experience problems with substance abuse (McCray, 2006), become alienated from their families and society in general (Zhang, D., et al., 2007) or become involved with crime and the legal system (McCray, 2006; Reid, 2008; Zhang, D., et al., 2007). Kearney (2008) found school absenteeism to be linked with substance abuse, suicide, unprotected sex and/or teenage pregnancy. Families are affected since parents may have to miss work to meet at school, or leave suspended students home alone to avoid jeopardizing their employment (Lyon & Cotler, 2007). One child's truancy can cause ongoing family conflict(Zhang, D., et al., 2007). Schools lose funding (Lyon & Cotler, 2007; McCray, 2006) and the community faces increased daytime petty crime (McCray, 2006; Reid, 2008). Absentees have higher risks of being victims or perpetrators of violence (McCray, 2006; Wilson, V., et al., 2008). Society loses potentially educated employees and pays out more in social welfare programs (McCray, 2006). Finally, in interviews with young adults who had not finished high school, Bridgeland et al. (2006, p. 3) found that most young adults who dropped out (74%) expressed regret at not obtaining a high school diploma and wished they could return. The youth in MacDonald and Marsh's interviews (2004) echoed these feelings.

However defined, then, the question of who is truant and why remains an ongoing concern. Sheldon (2009), in asking why anti-truancy efforts in the United Kingdom were not as successful as hoped for, pointed out that rates have been about the same for a long time. Hung and Hopko (2009) found some commonalities between truancy in rural Appalachian truancy and the more often-studied urban schools. Initially, Kearney (2004) said that truancy is heterogeneous across gender, race and socioeconomic status. Later, in a 2008 study, he continued to find gender not significant, although diverse populations such as American Indians, the disabled, and the extreme poor did have different rates. Lyon and Cotler (2007) found a growing divide between whites and ethnic minorities, for urban students and those with low socioeconomic status. Although many focus on high school, despite the problem of differentiating between chronic truancy and initial stages of dropping out, Reid (2008) says elementary school truancy is an increasing problem, at least in the United

Kingdom. Truancy is often associated with industrialized nations, and most research occurs in North America, Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom. However, Kearney (2008) found studies for South Africa, Saudi Arabia and India indicating that cross-cultural general patterns of risk for students are poverty, illness and behavioral/mental disorders. Family background, home life and school climate interact with psychological traits (Davies & Lee, 2006) across the heterogeneous truant population.

Other Becca Research

In Washington, the state legislature was given the task of developing a statewide definition of excused and unexcused absences (Harding & Burley, 1998). Under R.C.W. 28A.225.020(2)(a)-(b), an unexcused absence means that a student "[h]as failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day or has failed to comply with a more restrictive school district policy;" and "[h]as failed to meet the school district's policy for excused absences." ("RCW 28A.225.020 School's duties upon child's failure to attend school.") Thus Washington is left with the general (and unsatisfactory) definition used by Baker (2001, p. 13): any unexcused absence from school or class is considered truancy.

Early follow-up on the law's effectiveness reinforced some of the early criticisms but also partially validated this approach for truancy. Pittman (1998-1999) found that 90% of those students who were filed on were back in school, yet also reported that 48% of all truant students transferred, dropped out or their outcomes were unknown. A Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) study (Harding & Burley, 1998) found that 63% of truant students were not filed on at all, although the definition of truant was lacking so there is no way of knowing whether this means 63% of chronic absentees or 63% of all truants. Yu, Dimock and Anderson (June 1999, p. 2) found that 87% of truancy petitions did not require a contempt follow-up, in keeping with Pittman's statistic. The petition is often a "wake-up call" for most truants (Yu, et al., June 1999, p. 3) and the Bill, overall, provides a way for families to take action to protect children. While Chaney and Kysar (Chaney & Kysar, 1999) feared aggressive lockup policies, Yu et al. (June 1999) defended its early intervention approach, and found most students in detention were there for direct violation of court orders

and stayed briefly, with ample opportunity to purge the contempt. WSIPP (Harding & Burley, 1998) found that schools had increased attendance monitoring, some districts and courts had created partnerships to develop programs for truant and at-risk youth and that both students and parents were paying attention to the new requirements.

However, they also found that the process is most effective with students who were just starting to skip school, and that students with other, serious problems were less affected by the threat or actuality of a Truancy Petition. Resources for implementing the Bill are never enough, with courts and schools stretched to meet the need. With the emphasis on petitions, there is no tracking of successful interventions that prevent a filing (Harding & Burley, 1998) so that schools with low filings may either have successful anti-truancy efforts, or fail to file, or have ways of eliminating potentially troublesome students from the school. In a 1998 case study of 10 school districts (excluding those in King County, the most populated county in Washington State), WSIPP (Harding & Burley, 1998, p. 17) found that 10% of students were truant, and 37% of those were filed on. Of the 330 students with a petition prior to the study, 103 did not repeat their truancy, 105 had a second petition and 122 continued to skip school without a petition. As Yu et al. (June 1999) pointed out, the Becca Bill is far from perfect or perfectly applied.

Research interest in the Becca Bill abated after the first flurry of interest in its impact. A study in 2002 estimated that an additional 2,664 students were in school as a result of the Bill (Burley, 2002). Then, in 2009, the Washington State Institute of Public Policy published three studies of its long-term effectiveness. One study examined the variation in court costs and implementation over Washington counties (Miller, M., Klima, & Corey, 2009). Miller et al. found wide variation in the number of hearings, contempt motions and detention days per case. Referrals to community services also varied. Costs ranged by a factor of three — from $500 to $1500 per case, although the average reimbursement was $250 per case in 2009 (p. 1). In six of the 35 counties in the study, they found the law "lacked teeth" (p. 10) and court scheduling was a major impediment to enforcement.

Another study in 2009 (Klima, Tali, Miller, Marna, & Nunlist, Corey, 2009a)

examined specific programs within 89 school districts, both those targeted at preventing truancy and more general programs such as life skills classes, alternative curricula, behavioral modification or other accommodations designed to keep students in school. They found that diverse and flexible services targeting multiple needs simultaneously were characteristic of the most successful programs. Finally, WSIPP analyzed costs and implementation for school districts (Klima, Tali, Miller, Marna, & Nunlist, Corey, 2009b). Districts varied in their definitions of truancy, timing and reasons for not filing. The statewide filing rate was 32% (on students with 10 or more absences) (p. 1), but 37% of districts filed after 5 unexcused absences in a month, 60% filed at the Bill's mandate of 7 in a month/10 in year, and 3% filed at some other point (p. 6). The highest category for not filing was aging out (63%), followed by students responding to the threat of filing and attending school (47%) (p. 7). Some (20%) preferred to handle truancy outside of court. Smaller districts had higher filing rates, and districts with high minority populations had lower filing rates.

This Becca Research

The descriptive statistics and model results within these reports provide a much-needed and up to date picture of the condition of the Becca Bill and truancy in Washington State. However, there are three critiques of these studies that indicate a gap in investigating truancy.

First, none of the studies look at truancy on a per-school basis. The 2002 model (Burley, 2002) used county-level panel data to test whether filing rates affected enrollment using a linear regression. In the set of studies from 2009, the school costs study surveyed districts (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009b), the court costs study (Miller, M., et al., 2009) used data gathered from the courts, and the study of anti-truancy programs (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009a) examined district-wide policies. None of these studies explore the extent and nature of within-district variation. While a district-wide scope is necessary to examine community-based collaborations to prevent truancy or costs of implementing Becca's regulations, it is too wide too permit a more in-depth focus on school environments, locales and immediate neighborhoods.

Next, because of the emphasis on filings and court, much research covers what happens from the point of filing onward. The 2009 study of school implementation (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009b) did ask about what counted as an absence, and why schools do not file on a chronically truant student, but the focus was on costs incurred for filing, hearings and contempt motions. The report on anti-truancy measures (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009a) looks at one aspect of what happens before a petition, but from the perspective of identifying successes and gaps in access to services, not the parent or student's experience. These are worthwhile investigations, but truancy and its repercussions are events experienced by students, parents and school personnel long before a petition gets filed. These studies do not have a way to examine how chronic truancy develops.

Finally, a model for predicting the number of chronic absentees has yet to be developed. Because of the emphasis on petitions and their consequences, the research models used in WSIPP's studied aim to predict filing rates and costs or provide descriptive assessments. Klima et al. (2009a) did include the district counts of students with unexcused absences in their appendix, but at the district level, not school specific. Therefore, one of this study's objectives is to develop a school-based model of the number of chronic truants.

This study is unique for Washington in that it examines counts of truant students, rather than rates, and uses count modeling techniques in place of regression models. It looks at the role of school environment and the interaction with truancy for the pre-filing atmosphere, rather than post-filing, which is where most studies focus. It solicits point of view from students, school, community workers and parents to gain a rounded perspective on truancy in Washington, its effects on all those involved, and considers questions of youth agency and rights as existing within a larger social system.

Chapter III — Methods

Mixed Methods

To investigate this complex set of questions, this study used three methods: quantitative data analysis, interviews and a survey. These mixed methods follow Hemming's (2008) sense of combining different qualitative practices and quantitative techniques as approaches to explore facets of chronic student absence. This study uses Moran-Ellis' definition of integrated methods, where "different methods (or types of data) are given equal weight, and, with respect to operationalization, […] are orientated to a common goal or research question" (2006, p.51).

These methods were designed to generate knowledge not available by adhering to one epistemological approach or the other. One quantitative section uses state data that provided measures of bodies (students) instead of incidents (absences). This data enabled examining truancy and Becca with geographic variation at finer grain than in prior studies. This is an appropriate measure as the performances, outcomes and contests around truancy are personal and experienced by individual students. And, because truancy is both personal and social, a combination of semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a photography project for youth created avenues to examine that experience by those skipping school. Interviews with those who work within the system designed to address truancy generated insider knowledge. Parents affected by their children's truancy shared its effects upon the family and their experience with a legal system that collaborates or intrudes upon parents' scope of control. These multiple and likely contrary viewpoints serve two purposes in the study. They convey information about the experience, beliefs and opinions of those involved with Becca, especially from those whose opinion is rarely solicited, which makes them valuable in their own right. But, since one use of mixed methods is the ability for one approach to inform another (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006), the information from interviews was integrated into the survey portion of the study. The concept of transferability is more useful here than generalizability (Marshall, 1996), building upon the questions raised in the interviews to

investigate how this information fits in the larger project. A third portion of the study was a survey of principals in Washington State. The survey asked about attendance, policies for unexcused absences, truancy petition filing, and factors that affect school attachment. Survey questions were informed by and incorporated knowledge gained from student and parent interviews. In these ways, the methods combine to explore the research topic in a multifaceted way.

Ethical considerations

When conducting research with people, especially youth, protection of their rights and privacy is essential. Human Subjects approval was obtained for all sections of the study (see Appendix 2). All errors were reported and resolved. Changes to the sample size and age range were submitted and approved. Seattle Public School District granted approval for the qualitative portion of the study, as did RightBrain.org and the Changes parent organization. Youth obtained parent signatures for permission to participate in the study, and signed assent forms prior to the interviews. All adults signed consent forms prior to interviews. (See Appendix 2.)

All interviews were recorded and transcriptions returned to the interviewee for review. In cases where transcripts were e-mailed, permission for that method of returning transcription was obtained at the interview. Paper copies were mailed or handed to the interviewee when e-mail was not appropriate.

Measuring Truancy

The Becca laws apply throughout Washington State. While others look at the difference between a theoretical legal norm and its varied court application (Zhang, D., et al., 2007), this study examined the differences between schools in application of the Becca law regarding filing truancy petitions. Although the public school system is highly normative (Bishop et al., 2004; Ruddick, 2006), schools vary based on grade levels, funding, neighborhoods and culture.

In 2003, eight years after the Becca bill became law, truancy reporting became legally required as part of the No Child Left Behind Act (Prevention, 2010). Using form *"School Building Report on Unexcused Absence Truancy Petitions*

1302A/B BLDG", schools are required to report the number of students with unauthorized absences, the number with five, and ten or more such absences, the number of truancy petitions filed, the number of truancy petitions filed carried forward and any efforts made to reduce truancy. While OSPI reports absence rates for grades K-8 on their public website, the student count data was not openly available. Upon request, OSPI ran a special query and provided that data for this study covering school years 2003-2004 through 2006-2007. This data was merged with information from the Census 2000 and other local data sources to provide a measure of context for the schools.

OSPI data

Because schools report the number of students with unexcused absences, this OSPI query data offers an opportunity to examine truancy from a different perspective than measuring absence occurrence rates. Occurrence rates are calculated as the number of unauthorized absences / (# days of school X end of May enrollment). These rates are only published for grades K-8, although most absences occur in the older grades. While useful, this method suffers as the only approach to tracking truancy. Rates are deceptive: 100 students with 1 absence each have the same absence rate as five students with twenty absences each. The former is not especially worrisome, the latter is. The query data supports an examination of the number of students involved in truancy and chronic truancy, and schools' rates of pursuing Truancy Petitions. Combined with contextual data, this information uses schools as the unit of analysis rather than districts. While district performance is a handy way of summarizing information, the variation of schools within districts deserves scrutiny, as larger districts might have a greater range of school context, environment and performance. To that end, the data on unauthorized absences was combined with available demographic and contextual information.

The following table is a list of abbreviation and their definitions used in the study.

Table 1: Data terms and abbreviations

UA	Unexcused absences (only available in grades K-8)
SUA	Students with Unexcused Absences
SUARate	(SUA / Total Enrollment)*100
SUA10	Students with Ten or More Unexcused Absences
SUA10Rate	(SUA10/ Total Enrollment)*100
TP	Count of Truancy Petitions
TP Rate	(Truancy Petitions / Total Enrollment)*100
Chronic	Students with Ten or More Unexcused Absences
ChronicNF	Chronic Not Filed On = Chronic – Truancy Petitions

Dependent variables

The dependent variables are: Students With Unexcused Absences (SUA), Students With Ten or More Unexcused Absences (SUA10), Truancy Petitions (TP), and Chronic Not Filed On (ChronicNF). The last, ChronicNF, is a constructed variable that measures the difference between the count of Students With Ten or More Unexcused Absences and the number of petitions filed. ChronicNF represents the number of chronic truants who were not filed on. In the data, it was unclear whether Students with 5 or 10 unexcused absences were mutually exclusive or not. Since using Chronic Not Filed based on 5 and 10 absences would likely overstate the rates (since school *may* file after 7 absences) the Chronic Not Filed used in modeling is based on the number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences and the number of truancy petitions filed. This runs the risk of understating the difference, but is more acceptable than overstating it. Where petitions outnumbered students, ChronicNF was set to zero. This situation could occur where petitions were filed on students with seven or more unexcused absences (as the law states) but with only five and ten day counts available, the exact numbers in these cases of eligible students are likely less important than the indication that a school is following up on the absent student. The rates for Chronic Not Filed were calculated using the SUA10 counts as the denominator.

Independent variables

See Appendix 3 for a detailed description of the data sources.

Demographic information was obtained from files available directly on OSPI's website. Race and ethnicity percentages reflect White, Black, Hispanic and Other. Categories for Asian, American India/Alaska Native, Multiracial and Not Provided were not consistent for all years, so they were combined as "Other." Other student body measures are gender, percent transitional-bilingual and percent free or reduced meals.

The study limits its scope to alternative and regular schools. Home school liaison sites, Internet schools, preschools, special education and institutional settings such as hospitals or juvenile detention centers are problematic for considering truancy. Under some settings, the concept hardly applies (home schooling and preschools, for instance) and under others it is difficult if not impossible (juvenile detention), so those schools were excluded from the study. The few trade and vocational schools were included as alternative schools. Tribal schools were not included because they are often philosophically quite different from traditional schools, under different jurisdictions, and there are few of them.

Categorizing schools by grade level is not a simple elementary-middle-high school progression for many districts. Rather than attempt to classify schools in these three categories, allowance was made for schools that serve a mix of grades.

The OSPI data included the comments and indications of anti-truancy efforts by schools. These were condensed as either present or not present.

Washington schools used the standardized Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) as a measure of academic performance during the years of the study. Challenging and engaging academics can stem unexcused absences (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Kearney, 2008; Noguera, 2004), but the WASL's reliability as a measure of academic performance was an ongoing controversy (Cole & Barnoski, 2006; Orlich, 2003). Instead of using this debatable score, the study focused on aspects of teaching that can set the stage for academic accomplishment such as the number of students per teacher, the average years'

educational experience of teachers and the percent of teachers with a Master's Degree.

One geographical measure is the set of Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) that categorize places based on work commuting. RUCA codes allow for finer-grained analysis than classic urban-rural dichotomies or county-based studies. RUCA codes were obtained from WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, which maintains a cross-reference between RUCA and zip codes for Washington. Other studies have used geographic categories of Urban/Rural or Metro/Nonmetro (Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, 2002; Henry, 2007a; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000), or made no distinction at all (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991). These divisions obscure potential variation within the gross definition of "Urban" between city and suburban schools. With fifty percent of the population living in the suburbs (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002) that distinction is important. The final classification of RUCA codes for the study was Urban Core, Other Urban, Large Rural, Small Rural and Isolated.

School funding is one measure of the quality of education (Zinga & Young, 2008). Economic support for schools varies over time, yet the tasks schools are asked to perform increase (Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009). Information on per-student spending was obtained from the Census 2000.

Alternative schools can be a place to put students who do not fit the mainstream, and are a viable way to obtain an education for some youth. Therefore, the presence of alternative schools within a district was included as a way of determining whether students had educational options. This measure does not count alternative programs that exist within regular school buildings.

Other Contextual Data

The National Center for Education Statistics provided validity checks on school classification, and provided latitude and longitude for each school.

The distance to court for filing truancy petitions was believed to be an issue in whether schools would file Truancy Petitions or not, according to some interview subjects. Having to spend more than an average travel time for limited court slots was seen as a limiting factor for some schools. To include that measure, locations for Juvenile Justice Courts were obtained from the

Washington Courts to use for calculating a rough distance between school and courthouse.

As a way of creating an approximate neighborhood profile of schools, contextual data was constructed using Census information. The *Census 2000 Summary File 3* provided measures of youth-related attributes at the block group and district level. Information of interest included the school-age proportion of the population, proportion of school-age youth enrolled in public school, the rate of youth age 5 to 17 (the school years) in poverty, the ratio of married couple families to all families, the number of families vs. households, rate of families in poverty to all family households, the rate of married couple poverty as a proportion of married couples and other family types' poverty as a percent of other families.

Census files for Washington ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTA) provided information about proportion of households designated as linguistically isolated, youth and total unemployment, percent of households on public assistance and the ratio of renting households to all households.

Weapons incidents in schools were available at the district level from OSPI for each of the years of the study. Using the district enrollment on the report as the denominator, weapons incidents in schools were reported per 100 students.

The number of civil protection orders in Washington was included as a measure of domestic violence. This information was requested and provided by the Washington State Center for Court Research at the zip code level of persons seeking the order.

A query to the online Washington Statistical Analysis Center's Uniform Crime Report yielded general crime rates by community and county. This data are reported by year and police department and includes the crimes per 1,000 population broken down by violent crime and property crime. This data was matched to school information by pairing the specific city-based jurisdictions (Richland, Spokane, Kent for example) with schools within city boundaries using ArcMap Geographic Information Software (GIS). Where schools were not within a boundary, they were assigned the county-based data. For instance, Adams County has police departments in Ritzville and Othello. Othello school district is

within the city boundaries, while Ritzville has schools within Ritzville boundaries and without. Schools within the boundary were assigned the Ritzville data; schools outside were assigned the county data.

For the analysis, the geographic information fell under Close (for block group and ZCTA based data), Local (RUCA and crime) or District measures.

There was no indication of what constituted an unexcused absence; the data represents whatever criteria were used to report to OSPI.

Inclusion criteria

Inconsistencies and questions about field values were resolved by reference to the National Center for Education information and, in some cases, the school website. Missing data were included, where possible, through researching OSPI's School Report Card (an online historical reporting of school data) and/or the school website.

Statistical approaches are often critiqued within geography, but there are voices that call for renewal and reassessment of quantitative methods in a reflexive and critical manner (Barnes & Hannah, 2001; Holt, 2006; McKendrick, 2001; Sheppard, 1993; White & Jackson, 1995). One small way of using a critical eye on official information is to question the data provided. The four years of data contained 8601 records for all four years, all schools. A sanity check on the data provided yielded some inconsistencies. First, for grades K-8, 660 records contained a count of students with unexcused absences exactly equal to the reported number of unexcused absences, which seemed unlikely. However, many of the duplicates and problem records had counts that were very small, so that some cases could be included if the apparent misreporting was more likely due to having one or two students absent. In order to include those smaller numbers, records that fell below the twenty-fifth percentile of either count or rate within that error type were allowed in the study.

A second problem occurred in another 109 records that reported the number of students with unexcused absences as greater than the number of absences, which is an impossibility. These records were excluded.

In 382 records, the reported count of students with unexcused absences was greater than or equal to the total enrollment. This is a possibility due to high

turnover in a school with poor attendance. This study included schools with a ratio of count to enrollment up to 120%, in line with the national average of 20.4% student turnover, although rates have been measured as high as nearly 60% (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000).

Finally, in the school year 2005-2006, 157 records reported the identical number of students with unexcused absences for that year as was reported in 2004-2005. Where possible, the district offices for the schools in question were contacted. Most of the districts did not respond to either email or phone message, and many that did had no record of the older data. Fifty-one records were fixed and the corrections reported to OSPI. The fixed records, and records that fell below the twenty-fifth percentile of either count or rate within that error type were allowed in the study.

Out of the 8,601 original records from OSPI, 6,747 records qualified for the analysis (See Table 2 below for the breakdown).

Table 2: OSPI Final Records Included

All Records	8601
Schools with highest grade<=4	- 419
Home, internet, tribal, institutional	- 568
Regular, Alternative Schools serving grade 5 & above	7614
Exclusions:	
SUA>=5 and SUARate > 1.3	425
SUA > UA	103
SUA > Total Enrollment and SUARate >114.4	225
Duplicate Reporting for 2005-6, not fixed	114
	- 867
Total Records in Study	6747

Analysis

GIS

The problem of how to incorporate the contextual information, with its different and overlapping boundaries of block groups, ZCTA and districts was solved using ArcMap GIS Software. After calculating area for block groups and districts, these layers were intersected, and areas for the intersections calculated.

The fraction of intersected area to total area was applied to the Census data to calculate the portion of measure within each intersection. Each school was assigned its latitude and longitude from NCES. Schools (points) were then intersected with the block group-district intersection and values summed over block group and over district, to yield two measures for each item of interest for each school. For instance, youth poverty was measured for the block group containing a particular school and for the district. This same technique was applied for ZCTA5 areas. All layers were imported using the Geographic Coordinate System GCS_North_American_1983_HARN, Datum D_North_American_1983_HARN and projected using NAD_1983_HARN_StatePlane_Washington_South_FIPS_4602_Feet.

This is a classic way of handling GIS boundaries, but has its limitations. These include first, the dated nature of the Census data (2000). Also, schools were joined to Census data at either the vicinity or district level, rather than having the information calculated over school district catchments areas. However, catchments information is not currently available in GIS format, so this allows an approximation of school neighborhoods.

Count modeling for OSPI data

The dependent variables are counts, and all had variance greater than the mean, were highly skewed to the right, non-normal and zero-inflated (see Table 3 below, and Figures 1a-1f). Curve fitting using Stata indicated a zero-inflated negative binomial model was the preferred fit, with the next preferred model, negative binomial, having the least error (see Table 4 for fit statistics). Poisson models did not fit the data well.

Count models are used in studies of the natural world (Arab, Wildhaber, Wikle, & Gentry, 2008; Nodtvedt et al., 2000; Ver Hoef & Boveng, 2007), and medicine (Mwalili, Lesaffre, & Declerck, 2008), where event counts are often sparse. These models also have utility for the social sciences, since data can often be counts of events or people, where zeros are common, and no assumptions about normality or equal means and variances can be made.

Table 3: OSPI Dependent Variables Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Skew	Min	Max
Dependents N=6747						
Students With Unexcused	152.0	269.887	3.286	3.262	0.0	2911.0
SUA Rate	23.3	26.620	0.324	1.268	0.0	120.0
Students With Ten+ Unexcused	21.5	64.532	0.786	6.382	0.0	1199.0
SUA10 Rate	3.1	7.614	0.093	4.929	0.0	81.8
Truancy Petition	7.3	22.164	0.270	7.180	0.0	412.0
TP Rate	1.2	3.560	0.043	11.035	0.0	100.0
Chronic Not Filed (SUA10)	15.0	52.758	0.642	7.075	0.0	1036.0
CNF Rate (SUA10)	34.5	41.437	0.504	0.578	0.0	100.0
Only schools with SUA>0, N=5457						
SUA Rate	28.8	26.8	0.363	1.069	0.1	120.0
SUA10 Rate	3.8	8.3	0.112	4.458	0.0	81.8
TP Rate	1.4	3.4	0.046	7.736	0.0	70.6
CNF Rate (SUA10)	42.3	42.1	0.570	0.235	0.0	100.0
Only schools with SUA10>0, N=4145						
SUA10 Rate	5.0	9.2	0.143	3.933	0.1	81.8
TP Rate	1.8	3.8	0.059	6.997	0.0	70.6
CNF Rate (SUA10)	56.1	39.8	0.618	-0.320	0.0	100.0

Table 4: Stata Curve Fitting Results

Model	sum(Pred – Act Prob)	AIC	BIC
Students With Unexcused Absences			
ZI Neg Bin	0.178	66700	66673
Neg Bin	0.085	72896	72882
ZI Poisson	0.320	1640000	1640000
Poisson	0.320	2080000	2080000
Students With Ten Unexcused Absences			
ZI Neg Bin	0.338	35821	35849
Neg Bin	0.107	42578	42592
ZI Poisson	0.729	364000	364000
Poisson	0.727	505000	505000
Truancy Petitions			
ZI Neg Bin	0.485	32343	32357
Neg Bin	0.049	106000	106000
ZI Poisson	0.814	24804	24831
Poisson	1.233	174000	174000
ChronicNF			
ZI Neg Bin	0.327	39440	39467
Neg Bin	0.090	46390	46403
ZI Poisson	0.680	635000	635000
Poisson	0.680	871000	871000

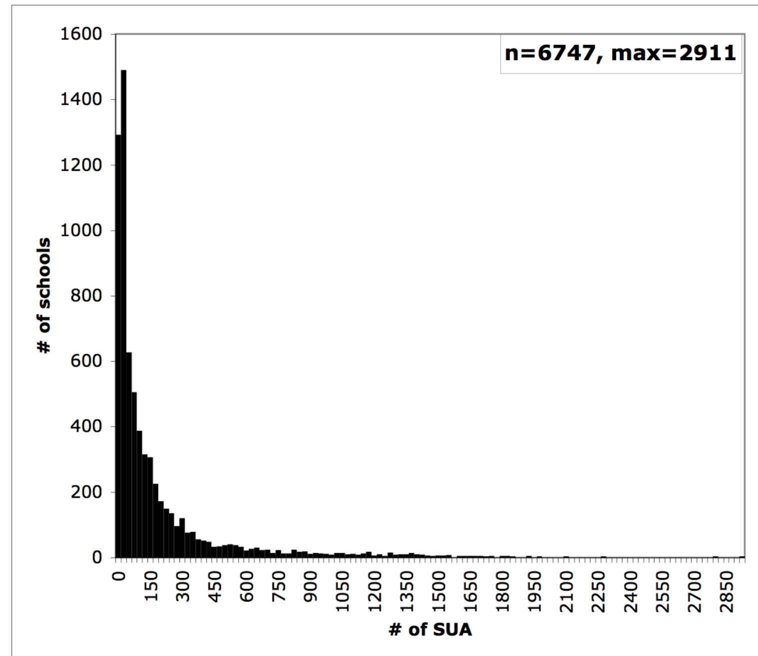

Figure 1a. OSPI Students with Unexcused Absences

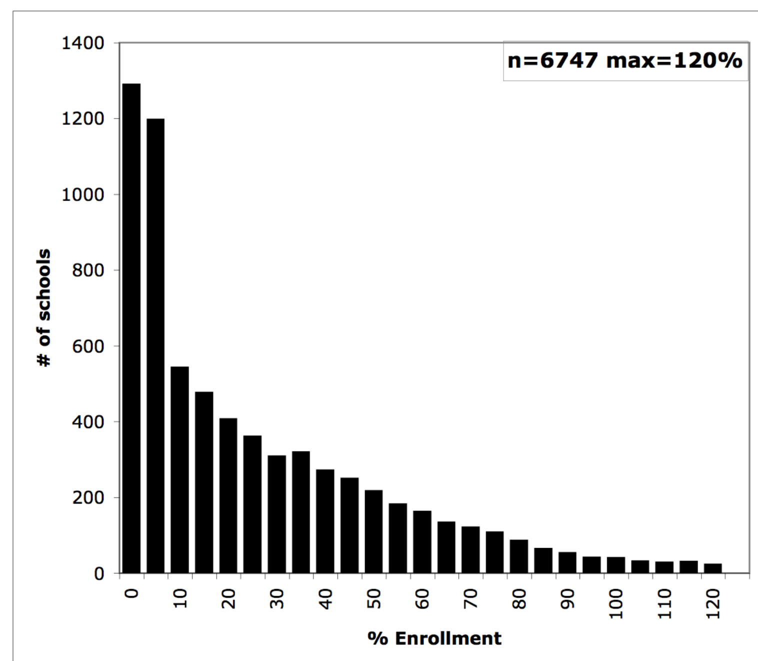

Figure 1b. OSPI Students with Unexcused Absences Rate

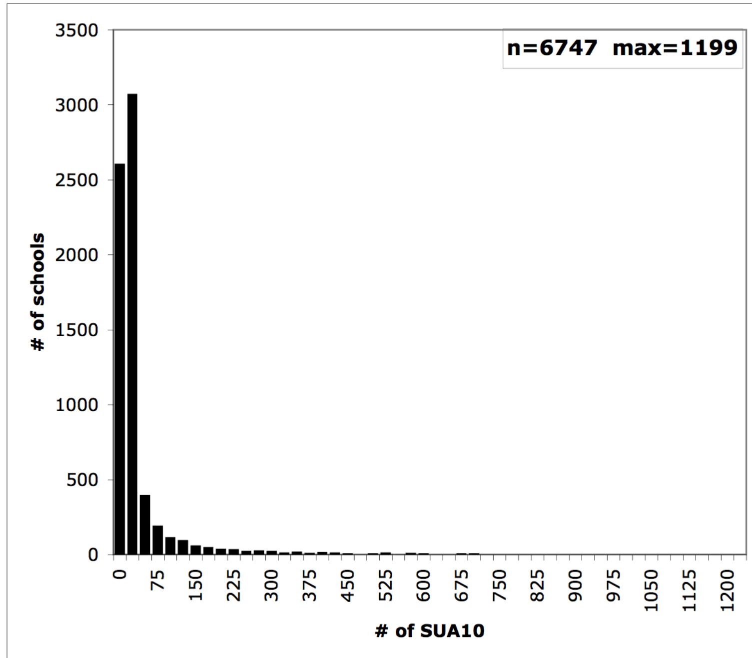

Figure 1c. OSPI Students with 10+ Unexcused Absences

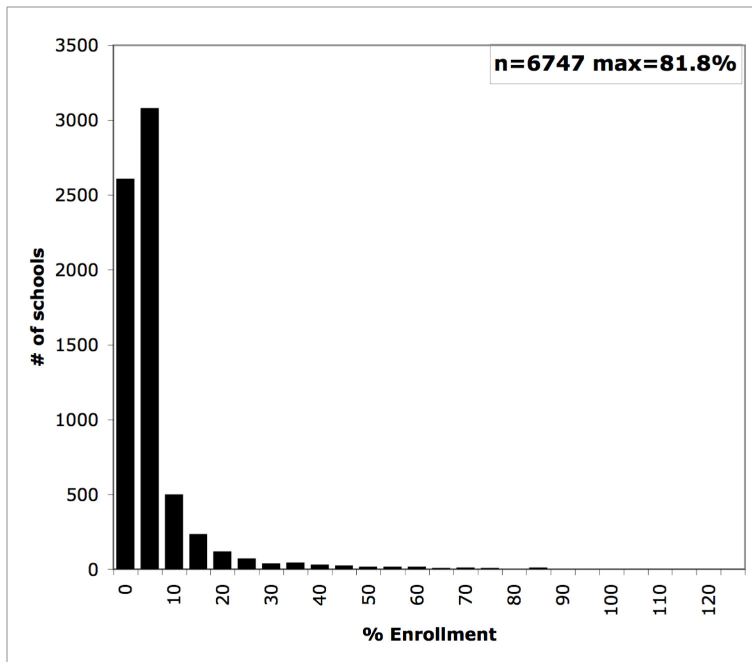

Figure 1d. OSPI Students with 10+ Unexcused Absences Rate

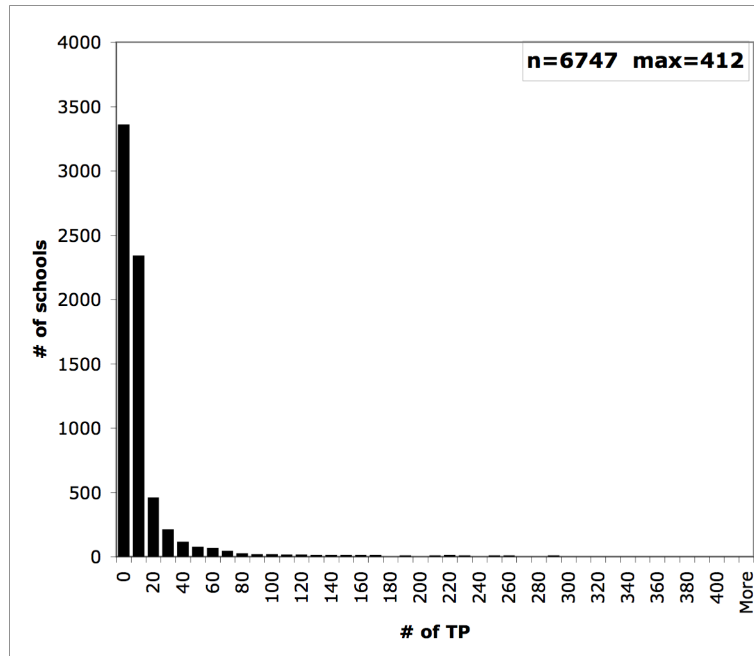

Figure 1e. OSPI Truancy Petitions

Figure 1f. OSPI Truancy Petitions Rate

Zero-inflated models can account for a distinction between the zeros in the data. A school with zero chronic truants may have no students with unexcused

absences, or, those students who have unexcused absences do not graduate to the "chronic" category. These are two different types of zeros. The basic model is:

$$y_i \sim \begin{cases} 0 \text{ with probability } \Phi_i \\ g(y_i) \text{ with probability } 1-\Phi_i \end{cases}$$

The probability of Φ_I is a function of $(z_i \gamma)$ where z_i is the vector of zero-inflated covariates (SUA), γ is the vector of zero-inflated coefficients to estimate (SUA) and $g(y_i)$ follows a negative binomial distribution.

$$P(y_i = 0 \mid x_i) = \Phi_i + (1 - \Phi i)\, g(0), \qquad y_i=0$$

$$P(y_i \mid x_i) = (1-\Phi_{i)}\, g(y_i), \qquad y_i>0$$

With a vector of covariates z_i,

$$P(y_i = 0 \mid x_i, z_i) = \Phi_i + (1-\Phi_i)\,(1 + \alpha\mu_i) \wedge \alpha^{-1} \qquad , y_i=0$$

$$P(y_i \mid x_i, z_i) = (1-\Phi_i)\,\frac{\Gamma(y_i + \alpha^{-1})}{y_i!\,\Gamma(\alpha^{-1})} \left\{\frac{\alpha^{-1}}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_I}\right\}^{\alpha^{-1}} \text{X} \left\{\frac{\mu_I}{\alpha^{-1} + \mu_i}\right\}^{y_i} , y_i>0$$

Independent variables were eliminated by checking for high correlations between them (Allison, 1998). For variables with a correlation greater than point 0.75, selections were made with an eye to parsimony in the final model. Key variables were chosen within families of related measures (housing and poverty, for instance). Where district-wide measures were correlated with zip code or block group, the smaller geographic area was chosen except for proportion of population that is school-age, which makes more sense as a district variable since decisions about funding and growth are made at the district level. Finally, 25% of the Special Education student values were missing, and this variable was dropped from the study.

The final model included measures of the student body for each school, school characteristics, close-in neighborhood context, local context and district level measures. Close-in measures included the block group and ZCTA

information. RUCA codes and crime measure were larger than block groups or ZCTAs but less than district and were labeled "local" for the model. This approach is intellectually but not mathematically hierarchical.

The SAS procedure COUNTREG was run for each of the dependent variables. Since count data often have a variable that indicates the number of times an event could occur, the COUNTREG allows for this by using the OFFSET offset option to control for that variable. For these models, a logarithm of Total Enrollment controlled for enrollment. The year was included as a factor to control for any annual effects.

For SUA, the zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) model proved singular even when using the most minimal model, despite checks for colinearity to diagnose the problem. ZINB models require some basis for specifying the zero model, and that basis was unclear for the SUA variable. For those reasons, a negative binomial model (second-best according to the Stata results) was used for modeling.

For the SUA10 dependent variable, however, a clear basis for the zero model exists in the SUA variable — a school cannot have chronically absent students unless it has absent students to begin with. Likewise, only schools with chronically truant students can file Truancy Petitions. Therefore, the SUA10 variable served as the known-zero indicator for modeling Truancy Petitions.

ChronicNF was modeled using a negative binomial model, due to problems with the zero model — the specification for the zero model would be the variables used to construct it and the Alpha statistic pointed to the negative binomial model as the better choice ("SAS Annotated Output Zero-Inflated Negative Binomial Regression,").

All dependent variables were modeled for all years, for all schools included in the study. In addition, models were run for regular schools only and for all schools serving middle and high school grades only as a check on effects from alternative or lower-grade schools. To counteract any potential annual effects, this schema was applied to two individual school years. The year 2004-05 had more reliable data compared to 2005 (duplicates) and was closer in time to the census information, a potentially more accurate combination. The year 2006-

07 was the latest year of reporting, where fewer errors were expected as schools settled into the reporting routine.

Interviews

The OSPI data offers a statewide, quantitative perspective on schools, truancy and the Becca laws. However, it includes no measures of school environment and cannot reflect people's experiences with truancy, schools or the Becca process. Qualitative information was gathered using semi-structured interviews. This format was chosen to keep a core set of questions to be discussed, while allowing room for conversations to cover topics of importance to the person being interviewed. Separate sets of questions were developed for each subject group (see Appendix 2).

Recruiting

Subjects were recruited using a combination of judgment and convenience sample. Subjects were selected by convenience in that the researcher had ties to several organizations that were instrumental in the study, but, as these groups were a likely focus for the research, they could also be considered a judgment or purposeful sample. The opportunity to interview those with potentially deeper knowledge and experience was preferred over some form of random sampling, which is often inappropriate for qualitative studies. Small size random samples have a high likelihood of large variation, and the characteristics of the population often do not follow a normal distribution, even if they are knowable (Marshall, 1996). The sampling for this study was based on valuing rich informants over many.

The interviews occurred in the communities in and around King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties, Washington. The three groups of people affected by truancy that were included in the qualitative portion of this study were adults who are involved with the Becca system, parents of youth with chronic absences and students. These categories were chosen to give a multiple approach to the school-family/family-child/child-school triangle that is at the heart of debates over truancy.

Community and school personnel

Teachers and community members whose work is either affected by or tied up with truancy, and by extension, the Becca laws in some way were included as a way of obtaining points of view from those who have routine contact with youth in their entanglement with the laws. Community participants were recruited through snowball sampling starting from a small group of potential participants. Some names were gathered through attending a local Truancy Conference, and followed up on as they referred by other subjects. Recruiting stopped when certain names kept appearing repeatedly and had declined to participate. Participants were asked about their role, how their work interacts with Becca and/or truancy and their opinions about the Becca laws regarding truancy (see Appendix 2). Twenty-one people agreed to participate in the study.

Parents

Parents, whose observations and experience are often discounted in education research, were invited to participate as a means of assessing Becca from a group that is neither the focus nor uninvolved but still highly affected by truancy. Initially, parents were going to be recruited from students in the photography classes via invitations sent home with the permission slips. Response was low, and participation even lower (return phone calls went to disconnected numbers, mailboxes were full for weeks, parents indicated they wanted to initiate the call but did not, appointments were made but broken). Therefore, parents were recruited from local parent support groups that focus on parent-child relations. One organization, Changes, has a large membership in Seattle and satellite groups around the area. Through word-of-mouth, another parent group in Snohomish County, drawing from low-income housing, volunteered for recruitment. Parents were invited to participate, and those who consented were reimbursed with a $40 gift card for local groceries. Parents chose the interview sites, tending towards coffee shops, although one mother did open her home. Parents were asked about their experience with the school system,

with truancy, and their knowledge of and/or experience with the Becca laws (see Appendix 2). A total of eight parents participated in the study.

Students

Students at alternative public schools were more likely to have experienced unauthorized absences, and this study hoped to be able to give them a chance to tell their side of the story through interviews. Students at two alternative schools were invited to participate as an adjunct to photography classes. RightBrain.org, a local nonprofit, conducts classes in alternative schools and granted permission for this study to coexist with the courses. The Interagency Academy is the public system of alternative schools — often referred to as “safety net schools” - for students who are having difficulty fitting into the traditional school system. Given that alternative school enrollments can be very small at a particular moment, and that some students only attend the alternative site for a semester before returning to a mainstream school, the two sites that were selected represented those with the largest enrollments. They also offered contrast in terms of general age ranges (one was more attuned to middle school students, the other to older students) although both younger and older students were present at each site. The first was housed in a building catering to a number of other concerns, with tenants and nonprofit associations next door to the rooms comprising the school. For privacy, this school will be referred to as Union Gap middle school. The second school drew much of its enrollment from youth released from juvenile detention, and was intended as a place where youth could reorient themselves to school and prepare for entry back to a regular school. This school had recently changed much of its administration, and delayed the photography class a term so that they could establish the new routine. This school will be referred to as Pine Grove for this study.

Photography class

The photography class offered a conduit for nonverbal communication about the places that mattered to these particular students. As part of the class, students were given disposable cameras to take with them outside of school and instructed to take pictures of places that were important to them in some way.

The disposable cameras provided picture taking opportunities beyond the digital cameras that were used in-class, when the group went on walking tours to take photographs locally. While photo-voice projects are often used to effective social action or change, this study did not do that (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wilson, N. et al., 2007). Still, the project was expected to benefit the students and schools. Students received instruction on the "how" of making an interesting or telling visual statement, and they had an opportunity to learn digital imaging software. The project made the school and students more visible in the community in a positive way through the display of student photographs in public settings. RightBrain.org retained rights to the photographs, and planned to show them in other settings in the area.

Using photography as a communication medium allowed students an avenue of expression to construct relatable knowledge about their life outside of school. Doing photography is simple (at least with disposable cameras) with the potential for great art and personal expression to supplement interviews with an activity that students enjoy and engage in. Photos have the disadvantage of reduction (Becker, 2007), but they offer multiple meanings. Disposable cameras for youth to take out of class allowed the research to go where the researcher cannot (Wang & Burris, 1997). Youth were instructed to take pictures of places that were important to them, with the limitations from Human Subjects of not taking pictures of people or personal, identifying situations. Up to four sets of disposable cameras were handed out and when returned, developed and brought to the student at the next class. Images were developed on a CD so that students could alter their work using digital art software. Students had the right of first viewing and could edit or delete images before adults could see them.

Interviews and participant observation

The researcher acted as a teacher's aide for the photography class, in a semi-participant observer role. Classes were held twice a week, for twelve weeks at the first school and ten weeks at the second. Over the course of the class, students were interviewed for their experience and insight about schools and truancy, and a second time to discuss their photographs and places they shot. In

semi-structured interviews youth were asked about their experience with traditional and alternative schools, their experience with cutting classes and their knowledge of the Becca laws. This study maybe did not push far enough beyond the now-dated concept of "giving something back" (Pink, 2003), but consideration of student time and involvement was acknowledged through a series of graduated gift cards to local merchants of student's choosing. They were provided with gift cards in the amount of $10, $15 and $20 for completing the first interview, returning disposable cameras and completing the second interview. Students received credit for participation in the class, and left with all their photographs on a portfolio CD. RightBrain.org also planned to produce booklets of the favorite shots from students at each school, and mount a framed photography show at the two sites.

The class at Union Gap had thirteen students. Contrary to expectations of recruiting for the class itself, the school structure dictated that students be assigned to an elective class at the beginning of term, so participants were recruited from the existing class. Five female and two male students participated. One student declined, one left class (and the school) early in the term, and four were deleted from the study (see below). The teachers at Pine Grove also assigned thirteen students to the photography class. Of these, two attended on a regular basis and one other slightly more often than the intermittent attendance of the rest.

In all, interviews with 10 students from two schools were included in the study. Four other interviews were deleted due to a) name confusion early in the study and b) forged permission slips that were recognized later in the study, reported to Human Subjects, and excluded. This was a loss in one case, due to the length of the interview. But the other three subjects were males between the ages of 13-15. Their interviews were quite difficult in that most exchanges, questions and attempts to draw out their opinions were met with short answers along the lines of "okay" or "I don't know," representing no great impact to the study through their exclusion.

Coding

Adapting La Pelle's (2004) technique for coding interviews within Word to Excel, responses were entered in a spreadsheet. Each response received a letter-number code to represent the type and number of interview, another code to indicate the person speaking (subject or researcher), and a number for the statement's order within the interview. In this fashion, assigned categories could be sorted, ordered and reorganized as needed. Statements that seemed to fall within one or more categories were assigned to more than one category. Coding was conducted in an iterative manner from general to specific, with several coding schemas started and abandoned or revised while rereading the scripts.

Broad categories assigned to the school/community interviews were comments related to: Becca, anti-truancy efforts, youth, the role of community, the roles of parents, schools and social services, truancy and suggestions. Parent categories included school transitions, Becca, accountability, parents (on themselves), parents/school interactions, parents on parents, schools, truancy and solutions. Categories from the student interviews covered their schooling background, school in general, alternative school, cutting school, school troubles, Becca and suggestions for improving school environments. Comments on their photos were grouped by the general observations on life that arose in the second set of interviews, the description of the photos, why they picked particular photos to share or put in the show and their opinions of the class.

Each category was further subdivided as needed and examined for common themes and/or attitudes in the statements. Many themes, such as responsibility, accountability, importance of interpersonal relationships or youth self-determination appeared in multiple categories.

Survey Of Principals In Washington State

The final quantitative piece of this research was a survey of principals in Washington State. The survey questions were designed to measure the attractiveness of the school environment, the opportunities for attachment, and the influence of school policies towards unexcused absences on chronic truancy and the filing of Becca-based Truancy Petitions. The survey was informed by the

qualitative portion of this work, incorporating concerns raised by teachers, students, parents and others involved with Becca. The survey did not ask for data available from other sources. Schools serving grades five and above were targeted, since these grades are often included in middle schools.

One thousand, nine hundred and thirty one (1,931) schools met the criteria for recruitment. Permission was required and requested from four school districts (Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Northshore) but denied for schools in these districts, reducing the final recruitment total to 1,729.

The survey was administered online, through the University of Washington's Catalyst website. The recruitment process consisted of three stages: a pre-notification letter advising principals that a recruitment email was coming in the near future, the recruitment email with a confidential link to the survey, and three follow-up emails to remind them to complete the survey.

Three hundred and seventy (370) school principals filled out the survey, a response rate of 21.4%. Eleven schools were dropped because they were new, and had no historical data available, leaving 359 in the study. These schools represented the range of rural-urban commuting areas with 52.6% in an Urban Core. One hundred and sixty nine (169) of the 297 school districts were represented in the response.

The survey and OSPI data were joined, with unexcused absence information averaged over the four years of OSPI records. Only the acceptable OSPI data was included in the join to survey data.

Results from the survey were tabulated, and aggregated answers to the survey questions were made available through Catalyst to those who had indicated that they would like to see the results. Out of the comments received from the principals who took the survey one was negative but the rest supportive.

Survey Design

Dependent variables

The dependent variables were: Students With Unexcused Absences (SUA), Students With Ten (or more) Unexcused Absences (SUA10), Truancy Petitions (TP), and Chronic Not Filed On (ChronicNF).

Background to independent variables in the survey

The broad areas of interest included the physical environment, timing, activities, homework, availability of counseling, food, parent involvement, security measures, discipline, mobility, teacher skills, policies regarding unexcused absences in general, and policies associated with the Becca bill in particular. (See complete Survey, attachment K)

The youth in the interviews complained of noise. Poor physical conditions or outdated teaching support (books, labs) reduce school attachment (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Noguera & Akom, 2000). Subjects in interviews mentioned that portable classrooms or secluded areas are places where students go to skip. Schedules are also important. Studies of policy changes (Wahlstrom, 1999; Yan & Slagle, 2006) indicate that adolescents benefit from a later starting school day. Other questions, about homeroom, recess and changing times were meant to contribute to measures of schedule.

Youth can form ties to school through involvement in activities (Diaz, 2005; Ozer, Emily J. , Wolf, & Kong, 2008). Cost is a factor for families' ability to have their children participate in sports and activities, so asking about affordability and assistance measures how accessible these activities are to students with fewer economic resources. While sports are the obvious category, not everyone can be on the varsity team. The availability of nonvarsity sports, or other activities, is a sign of attempts to engage students emotionally and physically.

Policies around homework influence truancy. One result of missed days or classes is the student lagging behind peers, never getting "caught up," disengaging from the learning process and avoiding school to avoid being

behind (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Southwell, 2006). Generous policies can promote students reengagement when they miss school, while punitive policies may serve to further exclude students from school. Whether homework assistance is available, and used, could indicate the efforts schools make to keep students on track.

The importance of the presence of counselors came up repeatedly in interviews. Most schools have guidance counselors, but psychologists or drug and alcohol counselors could have more impact on truancy by addressing small issues before they become big problems. Youth themselves said they liked having 'buddies' in the school system.

Youth and adults mentioned food and the lunch period. Adults were concerned that allowing students off-campus to eat meant they could keep going and not return. Youth were more interested in quality and quantity of food (or lack of same). Questions about whether off-campus lunch was allowed and questions about breakfast, second helpings at lunch, and food waste were an attempt to measure these concerns, since food is one aspect of school attraction (Noguera, 1995; Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009).

One piece of common wisdom is that high parent involvement in school reduces absenteeism (Kearney, 2008; Noguera & Akom, 2000). Parent involvement is often higher in elementary school, and abates as youth mature. Partly this is in keeping with allowing students more autonomy and responsibility as they approach eighteen, but measures of high parent involvement indicates schools where parents and the school are seen as cooperative. Conversely, do schools make an effort to involve parents through timing of events, or sponsoring social events? While having a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is one measure of parent involvement, it can also measure the involvement of one type of parent. Other questions attempted to round out the singular measure of PTA as an indicator of parent support.

Questions about standard tactics explored disciplinary policies and actions, which are critical components of school attendance (Fine, 1997; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Suspension is a factor in truancy, and measures of suspension were asked as a way of gauging whether suspension occurred mainly for serious reasons such as weapons and drugs, or for other behaviors.

The question on teacher skills was included because of several comments youth made about insensitive remarks and attitudes from teachers. One bad teacher has the potential to influence many students in a day. While youth may tolerate a school with one or two less sensitive instructors, as that number grows those teachers' attitudes contribute to a more hostile environment. Youth are sensitive to criticism, implied or direct, and one hurtful comment can last longer in the psyche than several positive ones (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Kearney, 2008; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991).

Schools with high student mobility can have difficulty fostering school attachment (Rumberger & Larson, 1998; South, Haynie, & Bose, 2007; Swanson & Schneider, 1999). Given that student mobility can be very high in some schools, do they make an effort to engage new students?

Lack of a consistent definition of truancy (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Lyon & Cotler, 2007) is a common theme in studies of truancy. Therefore one question asked about the minimum amount of missed time that would be reported as an unexcused absence.

Policies around unexcused absences may influence how students perceive the results or rewards of skipping school. Does being late to class count as unexcused absence? Do schools accumulate late-to-class incidents to equal unexcused absences? What is the minimum reporting period — missing class, missing all day or something in between? Do repeated absences cause loss of credit? Once a student has missed class, or the school day, how are parents notified?

Regarding Becca laws, how are students and parents informed of the law and does that make any difference? Does the school have access to a truancy board? Since not all chronically truant students get a truancy petition filed in the courts, what are some of the reasons that schools choose not to file a petition? Finally, since it came up repeatedly in adult interviews, what effect could the recent Baruchowitz decision have on the truancy policies at a given school? (The Baruchowitz ruling requires students to have lawyers present at the initial court appearance. Prior to this decision, students would be appointed lawyers if and when they broke the terms of the stipulated agreements that generally result from the first court appearance.)

Weighting

Records were weighted to represent the statewide distribution of schools respective to type (alternative or regular), rural-urban location and grade level. The type and grade level of the survey data was combined in one attribute that measured all alternative schools (those serving elementary grades too few to classify separately), regular schools serving elementary grades, and regular schools serving middle-high grades. The commuting codes were combined into Urban Core, Urban Other and Rural.

Survey data analysis

With the plethora of variables and 370 responses, a reduction in measures was necessary before modeling. Decisions about which measures to include were made according to quality of the question, spread of data through the categories and Kruskall-Wallis tests on the dependent variables to ascertain whether certain groups of questions had potential significance for the model.

First, some questions were poorly worded, or contained overlapping categories and could either be discarded or constrained. Discarded questions include: Q10 (How much time is allowed for classroom changes?), Q13 (about participation levels in school activities), Q17 (hours of homework, although 94.6% of schools had 10 or fewer hours required), Q18 (percent having difficulty keeping up, although the bulk, 65.5%, answered 20% or less with 2.7% over 60%), Q46 (transfers in or out of school, with 60% marking 5 or less), and, without Q46, Q47 and Q48 made less sense and were also dropped. Q29 (on food wasted), with 74.8% marking 0-15%, was also dropped.

Other questions were reworked to be useful. Q51 (How late to class does a student have to be for tardiness to count towards an unexcused absence?) was recoded to reflect < 5 minutes, 5-15 minutes, >15 minutes. Q33 (on PTA membership) was recoded to has or does not have a PTA. The series of questions on parent participation was dropped due to poor wording of the categories. While some thought was given to using the “>80%” involvement category as an indicator of high parental engagement, this seemed extreme and potentially

biased. A quick check of correlation between the parental involvement variables and the time of day was not significant.

Responses with 90% or more in one category were eliminated. School districts set discipline policy, but each school has room for variation in its application. Most schools (94.1%) used sending youth to the principal's office (Q36), used a minimum of 1 day or less for suspension (93.9%, Q37) and used in-class phones for security (94.3%, Q42). A high majority (94.3%) of schools use phones. No schools in this survey used metal detectors, so that category was not included. One of any pair of variables with high (70% or greater) nonparametric correlations was dropped. The number of varsity and nonvarsity sports activities for boys and girls were highly correlated (99.7% and 99.5%, respectively), so the measure of sports used the boys' variables. The availability of financial aid may influence participation, so responses to the aid question (Q15) were recoded into two variables, anyAid (if any scholarships or other forms of help were offered) and ampleAid (scholarships>25, or responses such as "whatever is needed"). Finally, guidance counselors and drug and alcohol counselors were highly correlated (99.2%). Given that most schools have guidance counselors, that measure was dropped in favor of drug and alcohol counselors as several subjects had mentioned their importance.

Kruskall-Wallis tests

As Allison (1998) says, there is no sense in modeling variables that are known to have little effect. Nonparametric tests for significant differences in the dependent variables eliminated the questions about secluded areas and portable classrooms.

Latent class analysis

A latent class analysis reduced the variables in the model reduced further. Although a "good school environment" is not directly measurable, schools may be classified and organized based on measures from the survey. Latent class analysis is a powerful tool for creating typologies of the subject matter, rather than taxonomies of variables (Roesch, Villodas, & Villod, 2010). Unlike factor

analysis, there is no assumption of normality. The model is designed for categorical data and is a good precursor to count models, which also make use of categorical measures. Applications of latent class analysis in the social sciences include measuring marital happiness (Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008), parent-child relations (Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006), child maltreatment (Nooner et al., 2010; Yampolskaya, Greenbaum, & Berson, 2009) and aggression (Giang & Graham, 2008). Roesch, Villodas and Villod (Roesch, et al., 2010) list the increased application of the method in the social sciences. Oddly, given its probabilistic and flexible nature (Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006), latent class analysis has yet to be commonly used in geography. While many of these applications are a means of classifying data for analysis, one other known use of LCA is to combine and thereby reduce the number of variables (Uebersax, 2009; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997).

Latent class analysis proceeds by running the analysis with varying class sizes, choosing the optimal model based both on fit statistics and on usability for the study, without privileging one over the other (McCutcheon, 1987), subject to passing a number of tests for fit. An overall chi-square tests the fit of the data to the model (the goal being to accept the null hypothesis of no difference between model and data). Akaike's information criterion and Bayes' information criterion are compared across models. The output provides class counts and proportions, and very small classes can safely be combined with other classes. Entropy (higher being better) shows how well the data are classified, which can also be verified by looking at a table of the average probabilities for most likely latent class membership by latent class assignment. While not always possible, entropy values of 90 percent or better are desired, but values should at least be above 70 percent (McCutcheon, 1987; Roesch, et al., 2010). Finally, the Vuong–Lo-Mendell-Rubin Likelihood Ratio Test and the Parametric Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test assess the model fit of the classes specified against a model with n-1 classes. In practice, these tests determine class boundaries, since at some number of classes, the null hypothesis that n-1 classes is as good a fit as n classes must be accepted. The two tests do not always agree, so if some number of classes is

analytically useful and accepted by at least one of the tests, then that model can be used.

Following Yampolskaya's wording (Yampolskaya, et al., 2009), a latent class analysis allows the researcher to ask what school characteristics are associated with high levels of truancy or chronic truancy? Are there subgroups or classes that can be identified and compared in terms of the risk of chronic truancy?

In this way, multiple models are compared and selected to reduce related variables to one indexed variable. For the survey data, latent class analysis was applied to six areas of concern: school environment, student support, control, truancy policies, truancy notification and how schools informed students about Becca.

In all cases, in keeping with Latent Class Analysis procedure, models were tested with increasing numbers of classes until rejected (McCutcheon, 1987). Choice of class included aiming for higher entropy, lower AIC/BIC scores, whether the classes made analytical sense, and if the division was accepted at one of the n to n-1 class fit statistics (see Table 5 for fit statistics). Graphs and class descriptions are in Figures 2a to 2j.

Table 5: Latent Class Analysis Fit Statistics

							Likelihood n-1 (H0) VS n class	
	# class	AIC	BIC	Free Par.	H0 LL	Entropy	VLMR *p*	Par. *p*
Phys. Conditions	2	2248.1	2298.9	13	-1111.1	0.754	0.0003	0.0000
Activities/Aid	3	2403.0	2504.7	26	-1175.5	0.879	0.8854	0.0000
Homework Sup	2	2935.6	3009.9	19	-1448.8	0.976	0.0000	0.0000
Lunch	2	1055.8	1083.2	7	-520.9	0.967	0.0000	0.0000
Discipline Tech	3	1733.2	1799.7	17	-849.6	0.771	0.0000	0.0000
Behavior	3	1543.7	1610.1	17	-754.9	0.804	0.0372	1.0000
Security	2	931.4	958.8	7	-458.7	0.812	0.0000	0.0000
Abs./Tardy Policy	2	1781.8	1832.7	13	-877.9	0.635	0.0000	0.0000
Notification	2	1921.3	1964.3	11	-949.6	0.81	0.0000	0.0000
Inform. Students	3	2208.4	2286.6	20	-1084.2	0.895	0.0000	0.0000

School environment classes (Figures 2a-2c)

Answers to the questions about physical condition were summed for each school into one count of concerns for the building and grounds, one for activities resources and another for concerns that affect teaching. Noise variables were condensed into one indicator of noise or not.

Starting and ending times were represented as one measure of late start (starting at 8:30 a.m. or later). The questions about homeroom and recess were dropped in the inclusive model, since they are confounded with the type of school, although homeroom was included in a middle-high grades only model.

Since the number of sports offered varies with the size of the school, sports and activities were flagged as being present or not. Affordability (costing less than $40 to participate) and available or ample aid contributed to the class.

Measures of students allowed off-campus for lunch were combined for sixth-ninth grades (younger) and tenth-twelfth (older) grades. These two measures, and whether second helpings were allowed, constituted an indicator of how lunch period may figure in a student's day.

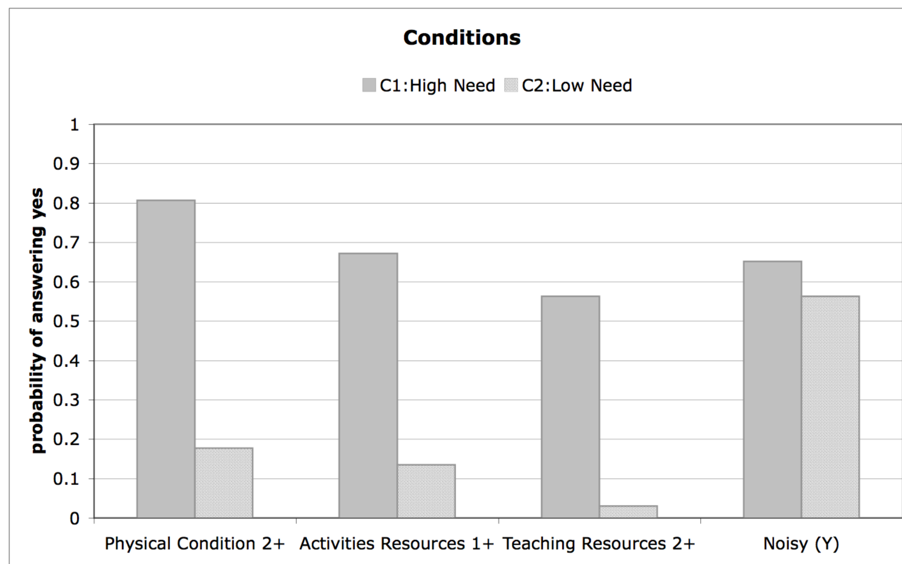

Figure 2a. School Condition Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

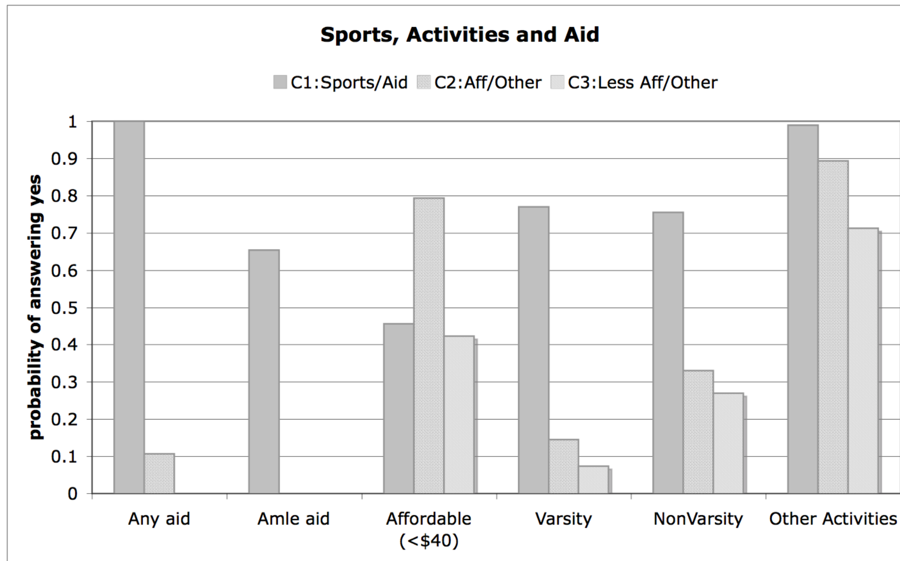

Figure 2b. Sports, Activities and Aid Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

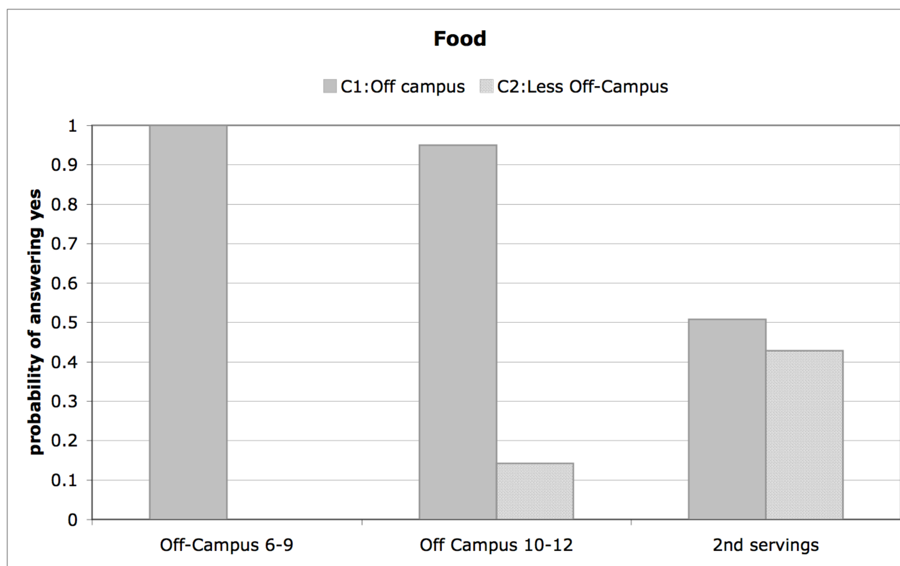

Figure 2c. Lunch Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

Student support classes (Figure 2d)

Homework support measured whether missed assignments can be caught up, if there are areas for quiet study, and what form of homework assistance exists at the school.

The presence of a drug and alcohol counselor was used in favor over guidance counselors or psychologists. Guidance counselors are present in some fashion at most schools in the survey (81.9%) as are mental health counselors or

psychologists (79.%) compared to drug and alcohol counselors (42.1%). Guidance counselors were also highly correlated with drug and alcohol counselors (97.2%), so one had to be eliminated.

Usable questions regarding parent support were the assessment of support, the presence of parents as helpers in the school, parent-child activities at the school and whether the school has a PTA or not. Latent class models did not fit well with this grouping — 2-class models showed low entropy and fit statistics rejected the 3-class models. Although all four indicators appeared to have significant differences in the dependent variables, these effects were not present in early runs of the model for all but the principal's assessment, which was included in the later modeling.

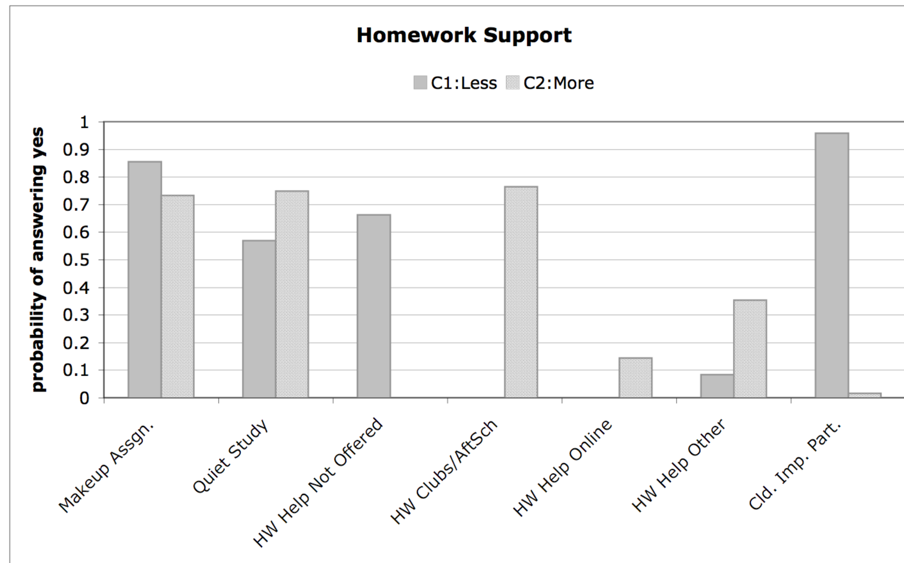

Figure 2d. Homework Support Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

Control Classes (Figures 2e-2g)

For discipline measures, classes were modeled on whether average suspension was greater than one day and the forms of discipline available (in-school suspension or detention, after-school detention, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion). The "other" responses were examined and categorized for whether discipline occurred on or off campus, but the number of schools that included "other" was small and so dropped.

Although the two-class model showed higher entropy, the chi-square test of fit was rejected, so a three-class model was used instead as the entropy measure was still within bounds.

Virtually every school used phones and controlled access, so those measure were not modeled. The presence of a fence and walkie-talkie were equally likely for all classes, so were eliminated from the final latent class analysis. The security class included the presence of security cameras and personnel.

The in-class behavior issues class used class disruption, bullying, gang activities, non-injurious fighting and property damage. The "hate" category was too small to include.

Given the emphasis on the influence of teachers mentioned in interviews, which holds with research on teacher-student relations (Libbey, 2004; McNeely & Falci, 2004; Ozer, Emily J., et al., 2008), this question was included on its own and not combined with other classes.

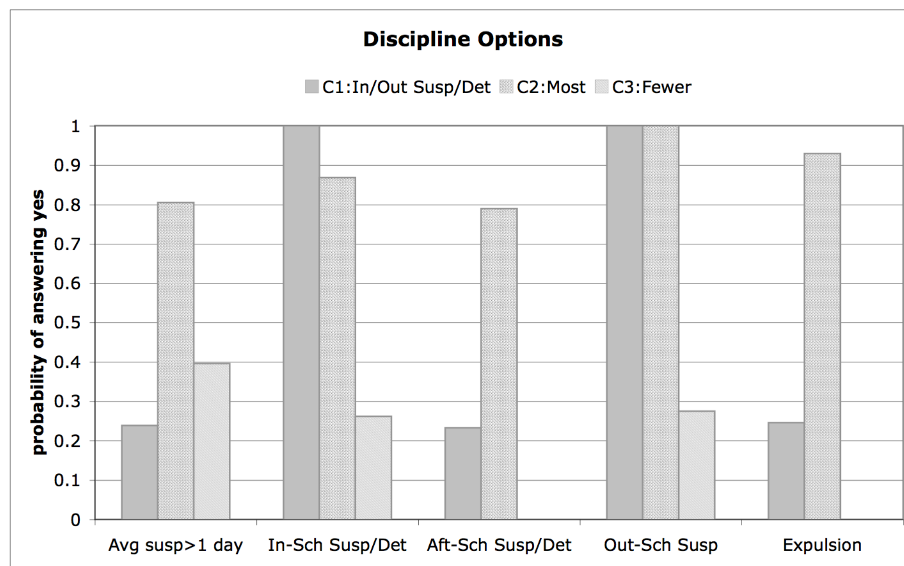

Figure 2e. Discipline Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

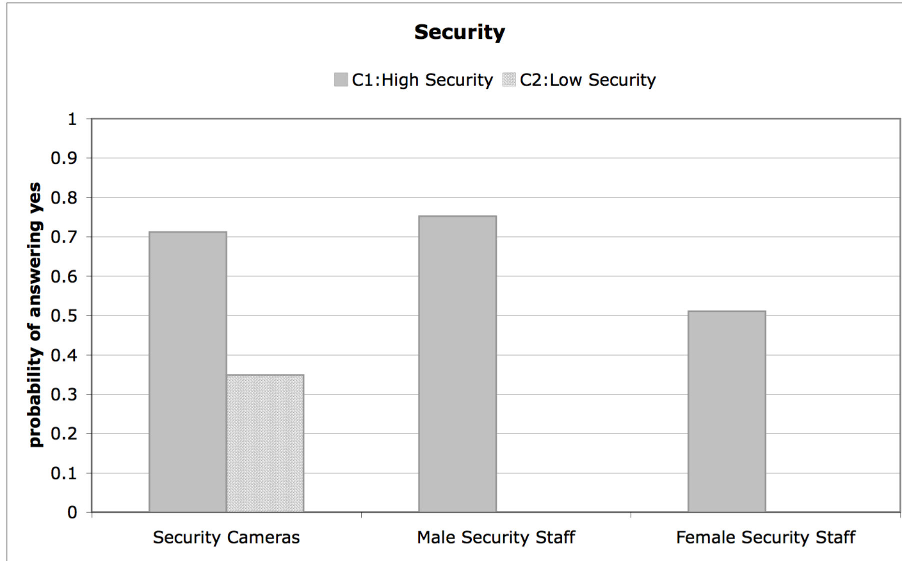

Figure 2f. Security Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

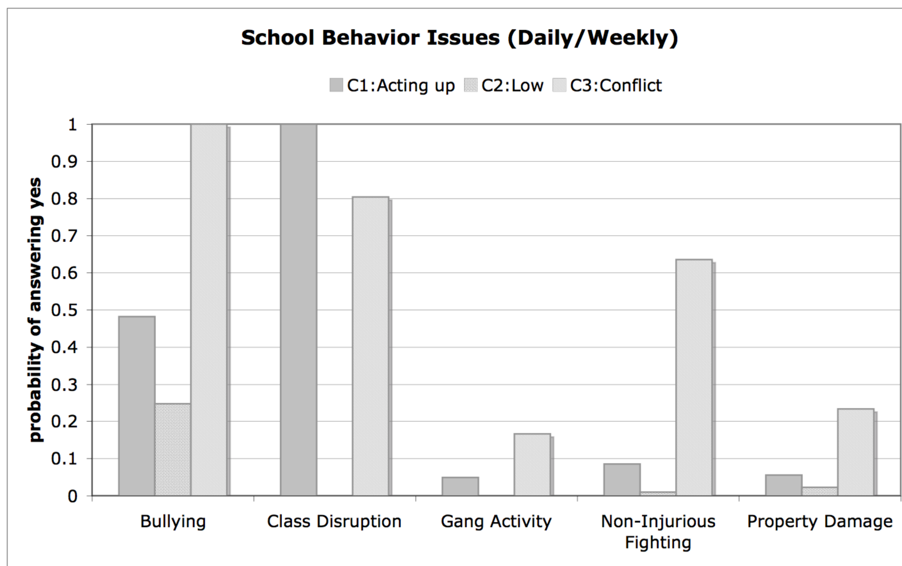

Figure 2g. School Behavior Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

Policies for unauthorized absences (Figures 2h-2j)

Tardy/Absent policies included whether being late to class counted as an absence, whether late to class incidents accumulated to equal an unauthorized absence and how many unauthorized absences could cause credit loss.

The variable measuring the amount of time reportable as an unauthorized absence was not included in the truancy policy class. One of the repeated

laments of truancy studies is that the word and what it purports to measure is imprecise (Willis, 1977) and does not reflect the scope of the behavior involved (Kearney, 2008; Lyon & Cotler, 2007). It is of sufficient interest to stand alone.

Notification measures how schools notify parents of absences. This classification scheme included whether phone calls were personal or not, and, if automated, what time of day the call went through, if the school maintains a website for parents to check children's attendance and whether letters from the school were given any special treatment (to stand out or not look "official" and theoretically have higher response). Since almost no schools use email, and all schools send letters of some sort, those two variables were excluded.

The potential ways that schools inform students about Becca were combined in one class. Non-parametric one-way modeling showed that unexcused absences rates were not significantly different for the ways that schools inform parents about Becca, so the parent measure was dropped from the analysis.

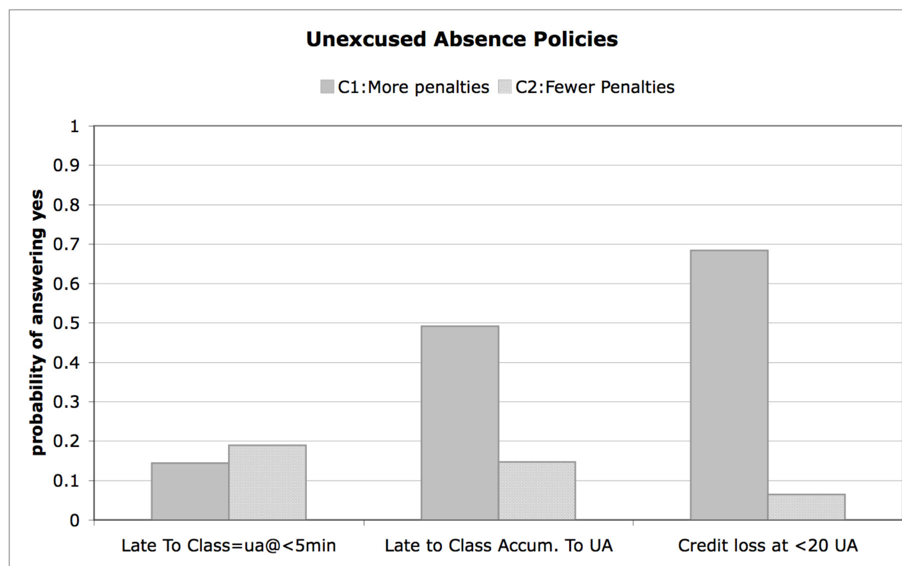

Figure 2h. Unexcused Absence Policy Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

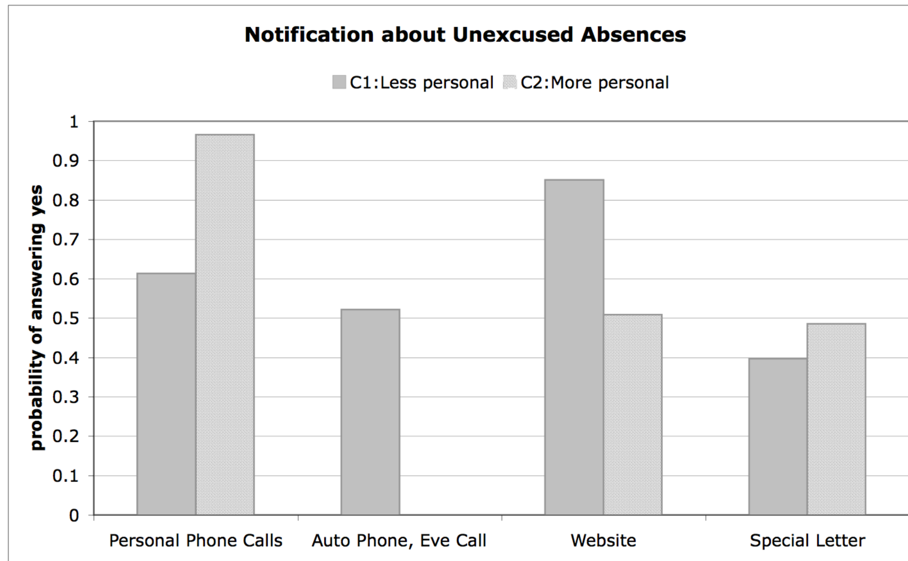

Figure 2i. Parent Notification Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

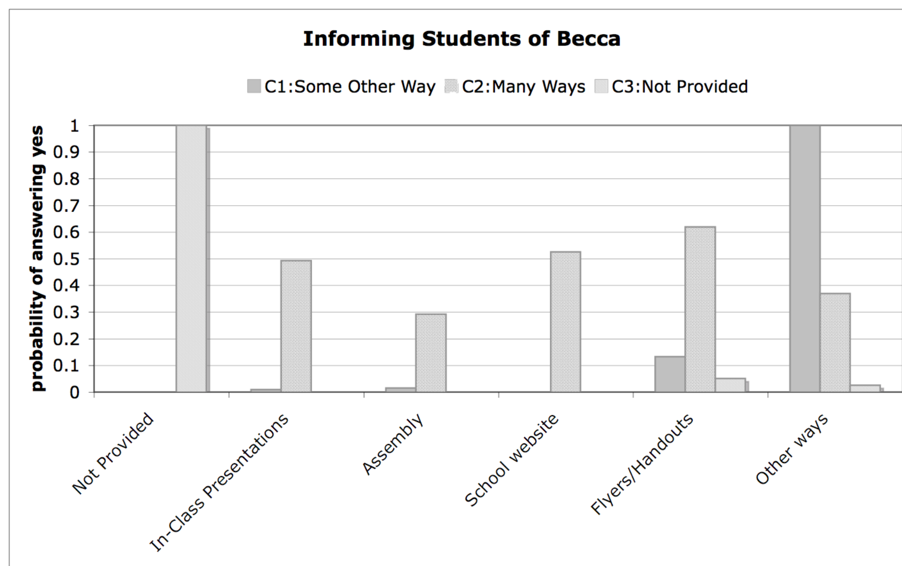

Figure 2j. Informing Students of Becca Categories, Survey Latent Class Analysis

Count modeling for the survey data

The dependent variables exhibited zero-inflated properties (see Table 6). With the classes assigned, the survey data was modeled similarly to the OSPI data, using a negative binomial count model for unauthorized absences, and a zero-inflated negative binomial model for chronic absence and truancy petition dependent variables. For SUA10, the zero model predictor was SUA.

Table 6: Survey Dependent Variables Summary

	Weighted Means			Unweighted		
	Mean	SD	SE	Mean	SD	SE
Dependents, N=354						
Students With Unexcused	212.02	294.20	15.637	154.0	246.2	13.1
SUA Rate	29.60	25.66	1.364	25.6	25.2	1.3
Students With Ten+ Unexcused	32.87	66.18	3.518	22.0	52.9	2.8
SUA10 Rate	4.72	8.90	0.473	3.8	8.7	0.5
Truancy Petition	12.46	23.61	1.255	8.8	19.8	1.1
TP Rate	2.00	4.12	0.219	1.6	3.7	0.2
Chronic Not Filed (SUA5+SUA10)	53.13	110.50	5.873	35.3	87.7	4.7
CNF Rate (SUA5+SUA10)	60.93	34.13	1.814	56.6	36.9	2.0
Chronic Not Filed (SUA10)	20.87	51.07	2.715	13.7	40.1	2.1
CNF Rate (SUA10)	39.59	37.88	2.014	36.5	39.1	2.1

The SAS procedure COUNTREG was used to run models for each of the dependent variables, including a null model to check for variable independence. The basic model used an indicator of school type and grade level, then classifications were added, and finally the pertinent OSPI data averaged over the four years available.

"What-if" Modeling

What would happen if the significant variables were modified towards the desired outcome? If schools could reduce teacher insensitivity or increase parent support, for instance, what effect would that have on the number of students with ten or more absences? Using the parameters from the classification model and altered data, a series of "what if" models were run to estimate the effect of the changes. Separate models measured the effects of reducing teacher insensitivity by one category and of increasing parent support by one category for all schools. For middle and high schools only, models were run to find effects of adopting more personal notification methods and having fewer penalties for unexcused absences. Finally, these changes were combined into one model.

Study Limitations

Limitations to the quantitative portions of the study are the (by now) age of the data. The census data are from 2000, and some neighborhoods and school

vicinities had likely changed by the time of the truancy data. The survey data was recent, but is being tied to averages data of several years past. Given that the reporting law came into effect in 2003, some of the data reporting inconsistencies are understandable as schools struggle to meet yet another reporting requirement.

The study suffers from a small number of students and parents being interviewed, which raises questions as to its validity. While the experiences of (mostly) ethnic minority youth in a safety-net school seem to have dubious value for application beyond their immediate environment, their input is still worthwhile because they have a richer experience of both regular and alternative schools. This study is not purporting to examine non-truant youth, nor to compare those with good attendance to those with poor school presence, but to seek insight into how school environments do or do not work for students who are already not conforming to the student ideal. Their input can illuminate those aspects of school that are challenging for this population of students. Others have used a small but informative number of subjects. Jeffrey and Dyson (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2008) used one youth per country to illustrate the issues that impact young people in areas that are affected by global change. Henderson (Henderson, 2008) followed one student for two years, exploring the construction of a "troublemaker," how his high literacy skills confounded some of this construction, and the role of teacher discourse in student relations. Rodriguez (Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009) followed six youth to divine the effectiveness of a Boston school engagement / anti-truancy effort. Although Noguera's assessment of schools through listening to students (Noguera, 2007) ultimately interviewed and surveyed 150 youth, these were spread over ten schools at fifteen each. However, simply because other researchers have used a small numbers of subjects, this does not necessarily indicate that the small count is exempt from criticism. The results would have been stronger with more students. However the reasons for the small participation stem from, and point to, the problems that surround truancy in general — poor school attachment, complex lives, parents who are not attuned to school. They also reflect factors over which there was little control. While the original plans called for later class times, teachers at Pine Grove assigned the photography class to the 8:30 time slot. Interviewing more

parents of the students in the study would have provided counterpoint to the other parents, but the difficulties of contacting and/or coordinating with the few who were interested also point to and reflect difficulties in the parental involvement with their children's school.

The size of the survey response and the need to condense measures for analysis means that some factors do not appear. While Latent Class Analysis is useful for identifying typologies, it is reductionist and could be critiqued for glossing over individual differences. Still, a typology offers a better way of categorization than, for instance, averages within some category scheme (such as type-location-grades). Classes group like schools together regardless of differences on other scores and allows analysis to show variation over type, or location, or grade levels.

One concern was whether year affects would negate a grouped analysis of the data. For that reason, school year was included as a separate control variable and two of the years were modeled independently.

Another limitation is potential bias. Students interviewed are not representative of all chronically absent students. Many were in the alternative setting due to behavioral issues, or their experience of cutting school was limited compared to children of the parents interviewed. These parents, while representing a range of economic strata and life experience, were all mothers and all but one were white. Adoptive families may be over-represented, according to a conversation with a long-time parent member of the support group. Parents were dealing with extremes of behavior that may not be indicative of the majority of chronically truant, although studies (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Kearney, 2008; Lee, V. E. & Burkam, 2003; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Skiba & Peterson, 2000) show that *chronic* truancy often accompanies other difficult behaviors. Still, youth were in a position to offer insights and assessment of school environments, and the parents provide a window into the range of issues experienced in the immediate family of the chronically absent.

Those involved with the truancy system cannot represent the full gamut of professionals who have some stake in Becca. The study did not include judges, for instance, or police officers. However, those who chose to participate included people intimately involved with student attendance and students on a day-to-

day basis. The study also included higher-level attorneys and legislators who look at the big picture. For that reason, their opinions matter.

Chapter IV — Findings

Becca: The Four "As"

A subject engaged with Becca from an executive level said that fighting truancy is the four As: attachment, attendance, achievement and accountability. Accountability emerged as a prominent theme in discussions of the Becca laws, with attachment and attendance grounding the topic in details of how accountability is theorized and experienced. Most adults agreed that Becca law's intent was good, that keeping youth in school was a worthwhile and serious goal.

In the forefront of comments made by many community and school employees was the (then) upcoming decision regarding Bellevue School District v. E.S., No. 60528–3–1 (commonly called the Boruchowitz case for the defense lawyer). This case in many ways embodied the tensions within the Becca system. The ruling, upheld at a lower court but going for review (and since upheld again) at the Washington Court of Appeals, created a requirement for an attorney to be present at the initial court fact–finding truancy hearing. On one hand, the ruling upholds youth rights, as a fact-finding hearing usually results in stipulated attendance agreement. Yet the fact–finding hearing is a place where youth, considered minors in most legal contexts, are required to know and argue for their rights without counsel. Those who work with youth in the court system said that some agreements contain unrealistic language, asking youth to sign a promise to "never miss another day of school." Youth do not realize or believe that they are going to be held legally accountable for that promise.

On the other hand, many felt that the Becca process was refined by years of experience and that, when properly supported, it worked well enough. They were angry with Boruchowitz for instigating the case, and questioned his motives, concern for youth, and whether this was another way to increase lawyers' fees. Those with more favorable opinions of the Becca laws viewed the requirement as snarling the process, because many cases would now be contested, pushing back any meaningful action for youth, pro or con, by another month or more. They feared that adding time to the existing gap between offense

and court date would delay needed consequences or services, and they would "lose kids." They worried that this would only encourage youth to take court less seriously.

This fear supports one of the biggest critiques of taking truancy through the courts, the timing problems that are endemic to school and legal systems. The most commonly cited positive aspect of the Becca bill regarding truancy was its requirement that schools notify parents. Before Becca, laws for compulsory school requirements were never acted upon until absences reached extremes of 6 months or more. Becca changed that, holding schools accountable for reporting truancy to the state legislature, notifying parents for each absence, and instigating some attempt to reengage the student sometime between 7–10 absences.

Even as this requirement is considered one of the best aspects of Becca, it is at odds with the experiences of parents in the study. Parents reported delays in notification when they discovered their child's truancy after multiple absences. They criticized schools for waiting until the absences were high before taking any action. Children who deleted automated phone messages or intercepted the mail explain some of this, but delays exist at the school level. Parents had to fight to get the information, or inform school officials about the law. Once undetected absences mount (90 for one youth, 20 or more for others) the student has a habit that has gone uncontested for a long time, making it hard for him or her to conceive of absences having consequences. Even when parents are notified promptly, schools must go through certain steps before filing a Truancy Petition. They can make schedule changes, request a parent conference and write up multiple attendance agreements before filing a petition. Once filed, restrictions in the court system delay timely action. Sparse court time, often one day a week, limits the number of cases that can be processed. Court officials must start with a stipulated agreement and gradually increase sanctions before resorting to juvenile detention. Some jurisdictions do not take truancy court seriously. One mother reported that it took the full school year for the process to get her daughter into the courtroom — only to have court cancelled due to the truancy officer's illness. The next fall, a new commissioner cleared all cases, preferring to start fresh, thus eliminating any consequences for students who had multiple

absences in the prior year. Contempt motions are especially difficult, as the time from contempt to court date can be "easily a 4 week process" at which point the youth is disengaged. It is possible to have a student in contempt status all year without resolution, or for them to be court–involved for their entire middle to high school career. Parents and social workers pointed out that courts can let things pass many times before a student feels any serious results for skipping school. One said that waiting months for a court date was "obscene". Delays between action and reaction mean that youth learn to ignore the system and increase disrespect for schools and court. One parent, who went through the Becca process twice, called it a "complete and total joke", saying that she knew it and all the kids knew it too. A truancy facilitator quoted youth as saying “So what? I’m going to go to court, they’re going to send me home, no big deal.”

In the court's defense, they must start slowly by law. They cannot come down hard on a truant student at the outset. Court and social workers talked about the barriers to professional cooperation, in that schools and courts speak different languages and operate on different time schedules. By the time the school files, they are tired of the youth and want the court to "do something" and "teach [the student] a lesson!" Schools think the student will go right into juvenile detention, since she or he's already been absent many times and broken many agreements. The court says, no, there are steps to follow. Unlike the law prior to Becca, where students could receive up to 7 days for *each* violation — leaving some youth in detention longer than criminals — 7 days is the maximum detention allowed. Although dedicated staff can and do work to educate both sides through printed material, resource handbooks, and facilitating round–table discussions, there is no state–wide effort to ensure that this communication takes place.

The system works well for certain types of students. One recurring trope was that the truancy portion of the Becca Bill excels at “keeping the good kids good.” For many students, fear of going to court was enough to discourage skipping school. Parents reported that the Becca petition was a “wake–up call,” either by getting their child back to school or by scaring them into navigating the system to find needed assistance. But the Becca law is supposed to work for all students, not just the “good kids.” With the law in place for over a decade, the

law could be expected to be common knowledge. Asking the youth in the study about their experiences with and opinions of Becca gives a glimpse into student view of the law.

Student Perceptions Of Becca

About half the students in the study knew about or had heard something about the Becca bill. One found out about the law in middle school and again while in court for truancy. Two heard about it through friends' experiences, or the rumor mill. Two more knew that there were laws concerning attendance, and one had been through court, so they knew about the law but not its "Becca" name. Others had not heard of the law.

Some thought the law was or could be useful. One student, whose friend went to court many times only to drop out and have a baby, said "kids need [an] education whether they want one or not." Another student felt that knowing the consequences of skipping school did not help her, as she was doing new things and was not scared of possible legal involvement. One expressed fear of the law, and another considered it "stupid" although was not able to articulate exactly why. Those who went through the process felt that they were misunderstood. One young woman recounted trying to tell the court that she did want to return to school but they thought she said she did not. Another student said she found it odd that when she had not skipped school, she was in trouble because her excused notes were brought in late. Later, when she skipped school "a lot," no one noticed and she never got in any trouble for her absences. Student experiences with Becca indicated a variety of stages of knowledge about the law, from ignorance to disregard, and some confusion over the process.

The disparate experiences of Becca that came through in the interviews corroborated the need to ask about how implementation of the truancy portion of the Becca Bill has varied geographically. For this, the data from OSPI provided a picture of Becca from 2003-2007.

General OSPI Results

Variation Within Districts

These personal descriptions of variation in the application of truancy laws were borne out in the district-level analysis of the OSPI data. While studies measure truancy and cost variation between districts and counties (Aos, 2002; Klima, T., Miller, M., & Nunlist, C., 2009; Miller, G. E., Brehm, & Whitehouse, 1998), differences within districts is more indicative of the variety of truancy. While the question is moot for districts with only one school, in districts with two or more schools we can posit a split between elementary and the higher grades. Variation could be based on the presence of alternative schools, with higher discrepancies in districts containing alternative schools. Finally, large school districts could vary simply because they generally have more types of schools. Large urban areas have neighborhoods with a wide range of incomes, crime rates, numbers families or recent immigrants. Schools often reflect these disparities in wealth and demographics.

Graphs of the district mean of SUA, SUA10 and TP are shown in Figures 3a-3c. District means are graphed from low to high as lines, the points represent the range for each district. The charts indicate that the overall shape and direction of the data are not radically different from year to year. In addition, the ranges shown vary. While there is a general trend for districts with higher means to have higher maximum values, even low-mean districts can have a wide range. This is especially true for overall truancy, but chronic and petition data also have this characteristic.

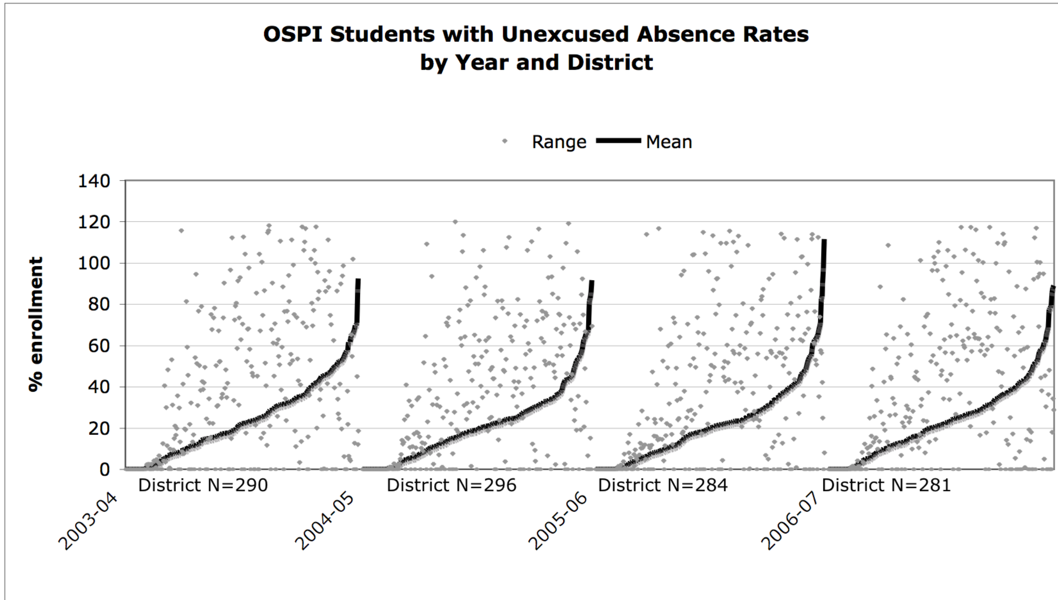

Figure 3a. OSPI / District Variability of SUA

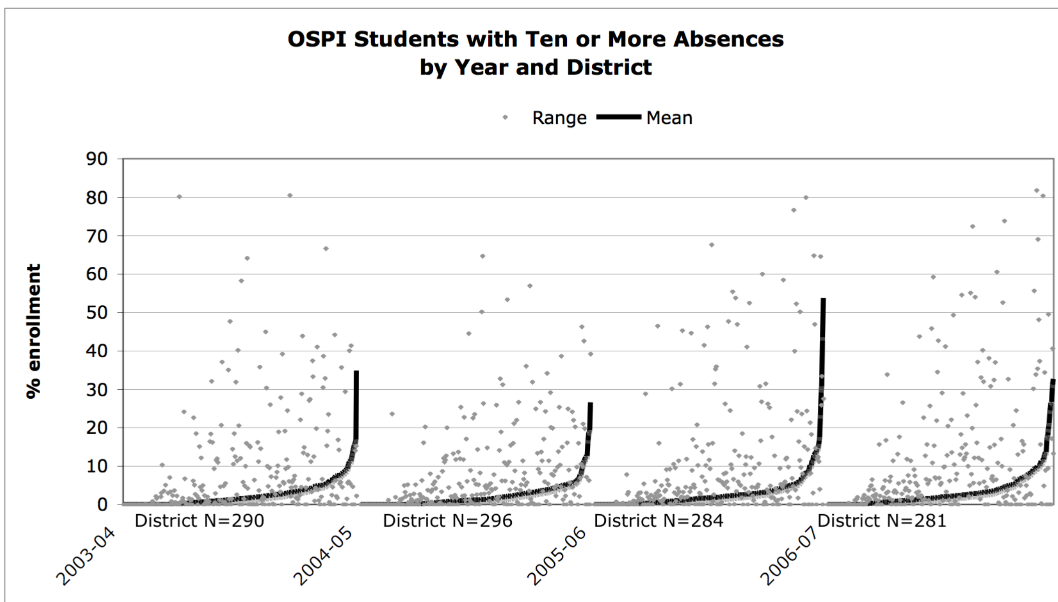

Figure 3b. OSPI / District Variability of SUA10

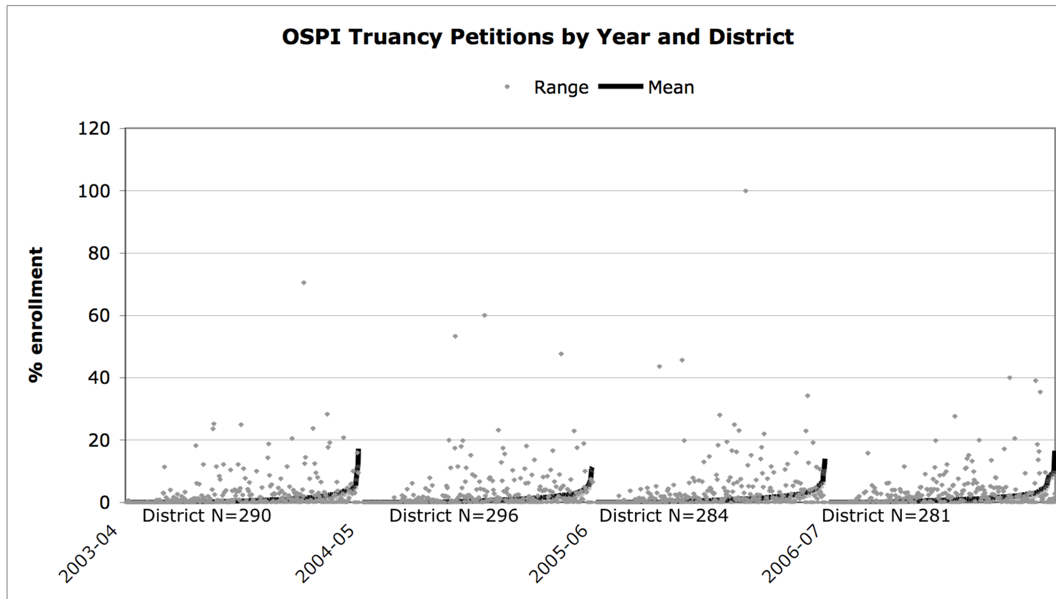

Figure 3c. OSPI / District Variability of TP

Further comparisons used the number of schools in each district and school type to test whether the variation was due to district size or the presence of alternative schools. The results were similar to the by-year graphs, with SUA having the highest variation, and TP the lowest. Although alternative schools had steeper slopes for each dependent variable, in all these comparisons the ranges within districts are not closely tied to the mean.

Comparing the mean number of students with unexcused absences per school (SUA) in each district to the mean number of students with ten or more absences per school (SUA10) in the same district revealed the variability between these measures of absenteeism. SUA and SUA10 have a correlation coefficient of 0.663, which says that there is a mild, positive relationship between the two, but that figure does not indicate highly accurate predictions for chronic truants based on the occurrence of occasional skipping. Likewise, the mean number of students with ten or more absences (per school) correlated to the mean number of truancy petitions filed (per school) in each district with a coefficient of 0.40, an even less strong relationship.

If districts had similar ranges for truancy measures, then comparing rates for schools within districts would not matter. But these graphs show that the ranges within districts are quite variable. For this reason, examining the data at

the school level appears to be a valid approach for understanding truancy in Washington State.

Means And Ranges

The detailed statistics for this data are presented in Tables 7a-c below.

Records representing individual schools were fairly evenly distributed between the school years included in the study, with 2005 being the least (24.2%) due to the larger number of schools excluded due to bad data.

The average number of students with unexcused absences state–wide from school years 2003–4 to 2006–7 was 152 per school, or 29.1% of students enrolled. Students with ten or more unexcused absences represented 4.1% of enrollment, with 21.5 per school. Truancy petitions were filed on an average of 7 students per school, or 1.4% of the enrollment. The Chronic Not Filed per school was 15, a rate of 70.1% (see Table 7a).

Means (Table 7b) for the demographic variables show that Whites are the majority (69.7%), with Hispanic (13%) and Other (11.8%) close behind, and Black (5.5%) the least. The standard deviations indicate a skewed distribution, and the maximum of 100% in some schools confirms that many schools have few non–White students, while others are entirely one category. Although some schools are all–male, the mean is close to 50% so that most schools follow the roughly 50/50 gender balance in the population.

Table 7a: OSPI Descriptive Statistics, Dependent Variables

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Skew	Min	Max	Rate
SUA	152.0	269.9	3.3	3.3	0	2911	29.1% of enrollment
SUA10	21.5	64.5	0.8	6.4	0	1199	4.1% of enrollment
TP	7.3	22.2	0.3	7.2	0	412	1.4% of enrollment
CNF	15.0	52.8	0.6	7.1	0	1036	70.1% of SUA10

N=6747

Table 7b: OSPI Descriptive Statistics, Independent Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Skew	Min	Max
Students							
% White	6747	69.72	22.99	0.2799	-1.201	0.00	100.00
% Hispanic	6747	12.97	17.27	0.2103	2.680	0.00	100.00
% Black	6747	5.54	9.17	0.1116	3.840	0.00	95.23
% Other	6747	11.77	12.21	0.1487	3.352	0.00	100.00
% Male	6747	51.45	5.28	0.0642	-0.114	0.00	100.00
% Free/Red. Meals	6569	39.21	22.52	0.2779	0.473	0.00	100.00
Academic							
Students Per Teacher	6379	16.48	8.67	0.1085	34.901	0.00	526.00
Avg Yr Educ Exp	6346	13.16	3.03	0.0381	0.418	0.00	34.00
% Teachers w/Masters	6340	60.09	14.32	0.1799	-0.311	0.00	100.00
Context (BG=Block Group)							
% Youth Poverty, BG	6747	13.60	14.40	0.1753	1.759	0.00	100.00
% Public Assist., ZCTA	6747	4.05	2.58	0.0314	1.464	0.00	22.73
% Hsehlds rent, ZCTA	6747	32.48	13.85	0.1687	1.071	0.00	109.09
% Youth unempl., ZCTA	6747	14.04	7.32	0.0891	1.303	0.00	52.17
% Ling. Isol., ZCTA	6747	3.27	4.00	0.0487	2.721	0.00	33.95
Dom. Viol. Fil./Sq.Ml	6747	6.87	8.80	0.1071	1.675	0.00	38.89
All crime/100 pop.	6709	4.99	2.87	0.0350	1.285	0.00	21.37
District							
District Size	6747	12.00	0.09	7.1580	1.395	32.98	0.85
% Youth Proportion	6747	21.23	3.47	0.0422	-0.457	11.68	33.14
% Marrd. Cple Pov.	6747	51.32	9.87	0.1201	0.865	26.30	99.90
% Youth Poverty	6747	13.35	7.24	0.0881	1.086	0.07	43.69
Spend./Pupil (in 1000)	6747	8.19	2.19	0.0267	5.758	5.61	40.57
Wpns Incdnts/100 enr.	6746	0.29	0.29	0.0036	15.537	0.00	11.11
Distance to Court	6747	11.82	0.13	10.7174	0.022205.61		4.64

The average students per teacher was surprisingly low, in spite of a few outlying alternative schools where one teacher "processes" large numbers of computer–based learning students. Also, average years experience is high (13.2 years), and a majority of teachers hold at least a Master's Degree (60.1%).

Youth poverty was similar for districts and block groups, although the block groups had more variation with some reaching 100% of youth in poverty. Most schools were in areas with 1.5–6.6% of families on public assistance, with low to mid rental rates (32.5% average). Youth unemployment averaged about 14%, with some areas reaching 52.2%. Most areas had low linguistic isolation, but some were as high as around a third. Rates for all crimes (property and violent) averaged around 5 per 100 population, with some areas reaching as high as 21.4.

Domestic violence filings per square mile averaged around 7, although again, some areas had upwards of 40 filings per square mile.

Average district size was 12 schools. The proportion of school–age children varied from 11.7 to 33.1% of the population by district with an average of 21.2%. Family poverty of married couples at the district level averaged 51.3%, but nowhere went lower than 26.3%. Spending per pupil (shown in thousands) went as high as $40,571 per pupil, but most districts were in the $6,000 –10,000 range. While a few districts had high weapons incidents (per 100 students), most had few if any, so that the average is low. The distance from school to the local juvenile court averaged 11.8 miles.

Table 7c: OSPI Frequencies for Categorical Variables

Year	**Freq**	**%**
2003	1701	25.2
2004	1724	25.6
2005	1631	24.2
2006	1691	25.1
School Type		
Regular	6176	91.5
Alternative	571	8.5
Grades		
Elementary	3547	52.6
Elementary-Middle	321	4.8
Middle	1167	17.3
Middle-High	264	3.9
High	1315	19.5
Comp. (K-12)	133	2.0
Anti-truancy efforts		
No	5815	86.2
Yes	932	13.8
Alternative Schools		
None/Home	1869	27.7
Alt, Alt + Home	4878	72.3
RUCA Codes		
Urban Core	4333	64.2
Other Urban	900	13.3
Large Rural	580	8.6
Small Rural	367	5.4
Isolated	567	8.4

Alternative schools were 8.5% of the schools in the study (see Table 7c). Most schools fell into the standard elementary–middle–high school grade categories, with 10.7% in other configurations. Only 13.8% of schools had some indication of anti-truancy efforts (13.8%), but most schools (72.3%) were in districts that had some form of alternative schooling beyond home schooling. Reflecting general population distributions, most were part of an urban core commuting area (64.2%), then in decreasing order, they were sited in other urban areas (13.3%), large rural (8.6%), isolated (8.4%) and small rural areas (5.4%).

OSPI Truancy Petitions And Chronic Not Filed On Model Results

Model details for Truancy Petitions are available in Table 8a and details for Chronic Not Filed in Table 9a below. The tables shown display the models for all years. Other models are available in Appendix 4, where Tables 8b and 9b compare the full district model results to the regular schools only model and middle school/high school models for Truancy Petitions and Chronic Not Filed, respectively. Tables 8c and 9c in Appendix 4 compare the full district model results to the individual year models, again for Truancy Petitions and Chronic Not Filed, respectively.

Reading the models

The models are large, and to illuminate the results, a walkthrough of the District column is explained here. This explanation translates to the other tables of OSPI model results.

The COUNTREG procedure models counts, but allows those counts to be considered proportional to another measure by specifying an offset variable. All models included the total enrollment as that offset.

The N represents the total number of schools with data, below are the number with missing information. The exp(b) columns shows the increased or decreased odds for a variable, holding all other variables in the model constant. The intercept shows the predicted number of truancy petitions if all predictive variables were set to zero, in this very close to zero.

For categorical variables, the omitted or comparison category is shown in parentheses. The exp(B) column is *e* raised to the power of the estimate, or the

odds. This number can be interpreted as odds, as the change in the number of the dependent variable or as the factor to increase (or decrease) the outcome by. For instance, the first model, "Student" includes the years and aspects of the student body that are often correlated with truancy. So, for the school years covered in the study, the variation in Truancy Petitions by year is significant and important compared to the year 2003-2004. The year 2004-2005, for instance, has 1.156 the odds of filing truancy petitions than the year 2003-2004. Or, schools filed 1.156 times the number of truancy petitions that year than they did in 2003-2004. Or, the number of petitions in 2004-2005 rose by a factor of 1.156 over 2003-2004. The P column indicates whether the result was significant or not.

As mentioned earlier, years were included to control for their effects and are subsumed under the student model. The student step included student body properties. Race/ethnicity used White as the comparison group. For instance, schools that increase their Black student population by 1% would expect .98 fewer truancy petitions, a statistically significant difference. In other words, the higher the number of Black students, the fewer truancy petitions filed. Other Student body properties are gender and students who qualify for free or reduced meals (FRM is a proxy for poverty).

The model then added school characteristics. These are the number of students per teacher (StdPerTch), the average years of teachers' educational experience (AvrYrEdExp) and the percent of teachers with a Master's degree (%TchMD). The type of school (regular or alternative), the grade spread (Elementary to High School), and whether the school has anti-truancy efforts or not (AntiTruEff) completed the school characteristics step.

As a proxy for neighborhoods, close to the school, the model added properties of the block group and ZCTA (zip code tracking area) A "BG" or "Z" after the variable name indicates the source of the information. Other close-in measures included youth poverty (Yth Pov BG), the percent of families on public assistance (PubAssist Z), the percent of households that rent (RntHH Z), youth unemployment (Yth Unemp Z) and the percent of households considered linguistically isolated (LngIso Z). An indicator of family conflict was represented by the number of domestic violence protection orders, available by zip code and calculated as a rate per square mile (DV/SqMi).

Enlarging the zone around schools, a series of measures examined more locally available information. School location was indicated by Rural-Urban Commuting Area codes. The multiple RUCA codes were condensed to 5 categories. Rural areas were divided into isolated rural, small and large. Urban areas include "core" areas, roughly coterminous with greater metropolitan areas, and urban other areas, consisting of places connected to the metropolitan zones. A measure of crime per 100 population (Crime/100) was included in the local section since the reporting is based on police jurisdictions that may be city-specific or county based for areas not covered by a specific police force.

Finally, district characteristics completed the model. These included district size represented by the square root of the log of district enrollment times the number of schools in the district. Using GIS to calculate measures based on Census data, district variables included the proportion of youth in the population of the district (Yth Prop SD), the percent of poor households with married couples MCFamPov Z, youth poverty Yth Pov SD, the dollars spent per pupil in thousands $perStd (K), the number of weapons incidents (WpnsInc), and whether the district has alternative schools or not (AltSch). Finally, the distance from a school to the county juvenile court (Dist. To Court) was included in the truancy petitions models.

The truancy petition used a zero-inflation model to estimate the probability of a school being a "certain zero", i.e. not having petitions because they had no chronically truant students. The inflation intercept (inf_intercept) indicates the odds of being a certain zero when all predictive variables are set to zero. The effect of the number of chronically truant students on the odds of being a certain zero are shown in the inflation predictor, SUA10 (inf_sua10). Each additional student with 10 or more unexcused absences reduces the odds of a school being a certain zero for petitions by a factor of 0.209. The Alpha result reports model dispersion which, as it approaches zero, indicates that a Poisson model would be a better fit. In this case, the Alpha was well above zero and its p-value meant rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 8a: OSPI TP Main Model Results[1]

TP		Student	School	Close	Local	District
N		6298	6237	6237	6216	6215
missing		449	510	510	531	532
Parameter	DF	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P
Intercept	1	0.020****	0.001****	0.001****	0.000****	0.002****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	1.156*	1.065	1.055	1.059	1.071
2005-06 (03-04)	1	1.231**	1.256****	1.233****	1.212***	1.241****
2006-07 (03-04)	1	1.187**	1.167**	1.134*	1.155**	1.212**
% Hisp (white)	1	0.990****	0.986****	0.997	0.996*	0.998
% Black (white)	1	0.978****	0.978****	0.983****	0.979****	0.980****
% Other (white)	1	1.002	1.008****	1.011****	1.012****	1.013****
% Male	1	0.987**	1.003	1.003	1.004	1.006
% FRM	1	1.014****	1.032****	1.029****	1.029****	1.030****
StdPerTch	1		1.016**	1.015**	1.014**	1.012*
AvgYrEdExp	1		1.016*	1.010	1.013	1.018*
%TchMD	1		0.999	0.999	1.000	1.000
Sch Type (Reg.)	1		2.769****	2.886****	2.467****	2.341****
Elem-Mid (elem)	1		1.472***	1.525***	1.663****	1.757****
Middle (elem)	1		4.150****	4.310****	4.376****	4.387****
Mid-High (elem)	1		4.771****	5.111****	5.288****	5.577****
High (elem)	1		8.884****	9.232****	9.411****	9.598****
Comp.	1		3.603****	3.456****	4.085****	5.063****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1		1.061	1.061	1.088	1.089
Yth Pov BG				0.999	1.000	1.000
PubAssist Z				1.000	0.998	1.002
RntHH Z				1.008****	1.007**	1.004*
Yth Unemp Z				1.001	1.005	1.002
LngIso Z				0.941****	0.951****	0.963****
DV/SqMi				0.996	0.996	0.996
Iso.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				0.710***	1.056
Sm.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				0.843	1.002
Lg.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				1.089	1.198*
OthUrb. (Urb.Co.)	1				1.037	1.134
Crime/100	1				1.017*	1.015
Dist. Size						0.990
Yth Prop SD						0.995
MCFamPov Z						0.986****
Yth Pov SD						0.989*
$perStd (K)	1					0.961*
WpnsInc	1					0.877
AltSch (none)	1					1.073
Dist. To Court	1					0.992**
Inf_Intercept		4.301****	3.390****	3.356****	3.306****	3.257****
Inf_SUA10		0.209****	0.153****	0.153****	0.152****	0.152****
Alpha	1	5.658****	2.864****	2.818****	2.744****	2.700****

[1] Year model omitted for space

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 9a: OSPI CNF Main Model Results[1]

CNF		Student	School	Close	Local	District
N		6298	6237	6237	6216	6215
missing		449	510	510	531	532
Parameter	DF	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P
Intercept	1	0.030****	0.001****	0.001****	0.001****	0.001****
2004-05(03-04)	1	0.906	0.850*	0.833**	0.832**	0.838*
2005-06 (03-04)	1	1.057	0.829**	0.793**	0.790**	0.798**
2006-07(03-04)	1	1.203*	0.798**	0.744****	0.752****	0.797**
% Hisp (white)	1	1.015****	1.008***	1.014****	1.014****	1.011**
% Black (white)	1	1.009*	1.007*	1.004	1.001	1.006
% Other (white)	1	1.015****	1.012****	1.015****	1.016****	1.017****
% Male	1	0.980**	1.014	1.013	1.015*	1.016*
% FRM	1	1.003	1.026****	1.024****	1.026****	1.026****
StdPerTch	1		1.012	1.008	1.003	0.999
AvgYrEdExp	1		1.005	0.996	1.002	1.007
%TchMD	1		0.998	1.000	1.000	1.000
Sch Type (Reg.)	1		2.234****	2.354****	2.003****	1.900****
Elem-Mid(elem)	1		0.938	1.068	1.188	1.266
Middle(elem)	1		3.289****	3.272****	3.427****	3.402****
Mid-High(elem)	1		7.860****	8.488****	10.160****	10.450****
High(elem)	1		23.046****	24.582****	26.816****	26.627****
Comp.	1		5.461****	5.525****	8.353****	9.503****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1		0.720****	0.719****	0.721****	0.744****
Yth Pov BG				1.000	1.001	1.002
PubAssist Z	1			1.045**	1.039*	1.017
RntHH Z	1			0.994**	0.996	0.998
Yth Unemp Z	1			0.986**	0.999	0.996
LngIso Z	1			0.954****	0.961***	0.975*
DV/SqMi	1			1.023****	1.019****	1.021****
Iso.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				0.436****	0.493****
Sm.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				0.648**	0.686*
Lg.Rur. (Urb.Core)	1				0.731**	0.772*
OthUrb. (Urb.Co.)	1				1.249**	1.179
Crime/100	1				0.985	0.989
Dist. Size	1					0.981**
Yth Prop Sd	1					1.025*
MCFamPov Z	1					0.990*
Yth Pov SD						0.996
$perStd (K)	1					0.953*
WpnsInc	1					1.321*
AltSch (none)	1					1.070
Dist. To Court						1.001
Alpha		382.511****	23.322****	21.456****	20.012****	19.243****

[1] Year model omitted for space **** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Years

Although all years were significant and important in the student model, years 2005 and 2006 were consistently so in all the models, with both having approximately 1.2–1.3 times the odds of filing truancy petitions as 2003. As these numbers indicate, the increased odds of filing were paired with decreased odds (approximately 0.85) of having chronic absentees without petitions than in 2003.

Student Body

For truancy petitions, none of the race and ethnicity variables had more or less than 5% change in odds, but percent Black was significant in all models. Percent Hispanic was significant in 2004–05 and percent Other was significant in all models except for the middle/high schools model. Although the change in odds were less than 5%, it is worth nothing that Black and Hispanic showed decreased chances of filing Truancy Petitions, while percent Other had slightly increased odds of filing. Gender was neither significant nor important.

The gap between chronic truants and petitions filed was significant but not important for percent Hispanic in all but the 2006-07 models, percent Other in all but the 2004-05 model, and percent Black was nowhere significant. Percent Male was significant in the School, Context and District models, but not in others. The percent of students receiving free or reduced meals was significant but not notable in all models.

School

Students per teacher and average years experience were significant although not important in all full truancy petition models. The number of students per teacher was significant in the middle–high schools only truancy petition models. None of the academic support measures were significant in any of the Chronic Not Filed models.

School type was again significant and important in all models, with regular schools having 0.4–0.5 odds of filing petitions than alternative schools. Regular schools were more likely to have chronic–filing disparities than alternative

schools. In the all-years chronic not filed models, the odds ranged from 1.6 to 1.9, but were less in the single year models, 1.4-1.5 for 2004-05 and 2006-07.

As with the other dependent variables, the odds of filing increase with higher grade levels served, with high schools having up to 9.2–10.2 times the odds of filing as elementary schools. Schools serving elementary to middle grades had 1.6–1.9 times the odds of filing, which jump to 4.4–4.6 for all middle schools, and 5.2-5.6 for schools serving middle to high grades in all models except the individual year models 2004-05 and 2006-07, where the odds are 7.4 and 5.9. The difference between regular and alternative schools appears in the odds for comprehensive schools, with 5.2 in the district model compared to 3.2 for regular schools only. The 2004-05 model stands out, with 10.8 times the likelihood of filing.

When measuring the odds of a difference in chronic absentees and filings all other grade levels had significant and increasing odd compared to elementary schools, with a few exceptions for elementary-middle schools. While elementary-middle schools were from 1.1 to 2 times as likely to have a difference as elementary only, middle schools had 3.2-3.8 the odds. Older grades sharply increase the odds, with middle-high schools having 8.4-10.7 in all but the 2006-07 model, which had 21 times the odds. By high school, the odds have increased to 23.4-27.1 in all but the 2006-07 model, again, which shows 39.7 times the odds of a difference.

Anti-truancy efforts were not significant for truancy petitions in any model, but schools with anti–truancy programs in the District and Regular models were less likely to have disparity by a factor of 0.75-0.76. The distance to court was significant in the all-year and the regular-only petition models, but had only minor affect (approximately 0.99 less odds). The distance to court was significant in the School characteristics for chronic not filed model, but nowhere else.

Close To School

In both models for filing truancy petitions and measuring the gap in filing, few of the contextual variables met the 5% change criteria. The exception was crime rates for the 2006-07 gap in filing model, with a factor of 1.05.

For petitions, family poverty for married couples was significant in all models. Total households renting and linguistic isolation were both significant in the all–years district and regular models, and the 2006-07 model.

Youth poverty was significant in the all–year petitions models and the middle- high school and 2006-07 chronic not filed models. The percent of linguistically isolated families was significant in all but the middle-high school and 2004-05 models. The percent of linguistically isolated households was significant in the full and regular –school models. Domestic violence filings per square mile were significant in the all–years regular school only and middle/high schools only models. Domestic violence filings was significant is all models except the 2006-07 model.

For chronic not filed models, youth proportion was significant for the district and regular schools models and married couple family poverty for all but the 2006-07 models.

Local Context

For the truancy petition models, two of the commuting areas had significant and important differences from the omitted category of the Urban Core. In the all–years model, Large Rural areas were 1.2–1.3 times as likely to file truancy petitions, and Other Urban areas were 1.2 times as likely as schools in the Urban Core. In the 2006 models, Large Rural areas were 1.6–1.7 times as likely to file in all models. None of these effects appeared in the 2004 models.

Schools located in isolated areas were around 50% less likely to have chronic absentees not filed on than Urban Core school in all but the 2006 models, where the odds were 0.82. Schools in small rural areas were significant and notable in the regular and middle-high school models, with odds of 0.66-0.67. Large rural areas were only significant and important (0.79 odds) in the regular-schools model. Other Urban schools were more likely (by factors of 1.1-1.5) than Urban Core schools to have a difference in eligible vs. filed, except for the middle-high model, where the odds were 0.95.

District

Spending per pupil was significant in the all–years model, but significant and important in 2006 only, with 0.9 fewer odds of filing per extra thousand spent per pupil. In contrast, spending per pupil was significant and notable for chronic not filed in the full model, middle-high schools and 2004-05 models, with higher spending associated with a lower difference between chronic truants and filing by factors from 0.90-.95.

The weapons incidents per 100 students rate was neither significant nor important in any of the petition models. They were significant and notable for the chronic not filed full, regular and middle–high schools only models, with 1.3-1.5 the odds, and in the 2006-07 model, with 2.5 the odds.

Districts that had alternative schools and/or home school options were only significant and important for truancy petitions in the middle–high school model, where they were 1.2 times more likely to file than districts with no or only home school options. For chronic not filed, they were significant and notable only in the year models, with increased options being associated with less odds of a difference in 2004-05 (0.7) and more odds in 2006-07 (1.4).

OSPI Summary for Truancy Petitions and Chronic Not Filed On

Measures that showed consistent importance across most of the models were the grade levels served by the school, the type of school and location. In general, the higher the grade levels served, the more petitions filed and the larger the gap between chronic absentees and number of petitions. Alternative schools were more likely to have students with 10 or more absences and file on those students. Regular schools were more likely to have a larger gap between those eligible and actual filings. Location mattered in several ways. Schools in Other Urban areas had more filings and a larger difference between those eligible and those filed on than found in schools within Urban Core areas. Schools in more rural areas may pursue filing more aggressively. Schools with anti-truancy measures had less of a gap between the chronically absent students and the number of truancy petitions filed. The availability of alternative schools was only important for petition filings, in that their presence meant more petitions.

Finally, increased spending per pupil was related to lower filings and a smaller gap between those who could be and those who are filed on.

The tables below show counts and rates for the significant and important variables from the models. Tables 10a-b report truancy petitions, followed by Tables 11a-b for students with chronic absenteeism who were not filed on.

Table 10a: OSPI, Number Of Truancy Petitions

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	10670	10048	622	795	112	2737	438	6506	82
2004	12062	11151	911	909	84	2646	441	7831	151
2005	13243	12759	484	1229	119	2644	358	8783	110
2006	13568	12984	584	986	139	2699	374	9289	81
School Location by RUCA									
Isolated Rural	1190	1142	48	96	81	134	225	557	97
Small Rural	1611	1463	148	105	32	368	53	1025	28
Large Rural	5485	5303	182	288	53	1210	153	3673	108
Other Urban	5780	5506	274	534	55	1584	117	3490	0
Urban Core	35477	33528	1949	2896	233	7430	1063	23664	191
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	38797	36813	1984	3319	328	8728	1096	24934	392
Yes	10746	10129	617	600	126	1998	515	7475	32
% Households Linguistically Isolated in ZCTA									
Low	10057	9274	783	778	195	2003	337	6547	197
Medium	20199	19211	988	1475	135	4757	769	12882	181
High	19287	18457	830	1666	124	3966	505	12980	46
Spending per student in thousands									
Low	14893	14011	882	952	129	3226	794	9718	74
Medium	20120	18889	1231	1691	153	4335	403	13386	152
High	14530	14042	488	1276	172	3165	414	9305	198
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	39309	36708	2601	3023	254	8834	1134	25766	298
No	10234	10234	0	896	200	1892	477	6643	126

Table 10b: OSPI, Rates Of Truancy Petitions (% Of Enrollment)

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	1.22	1.17	2.77	0.21	0.44	1.54	1.96	2.38	1.38
2004	1.34	1.27	4.38	0.23	0.36	1.46	2.19	2.82	2.13
2005	1.56	1.53	2.66	0.32	0.51	1.57	1.85	3.45	1.81
2006	1.51	1.49	2.78	0.26	0.56	1.55	1.94	3.28	1.27
School Location by RUCA									
Isolated Rural	1.17	1.14	3.67	0.28	0.89	1.23	1.30	2.26	1.64
Small Rural	1.34	1.25	5.85	0.25	0.71	1.57	1.31	2.33	2.02
Large Rural	2.17	2.12	5.02	0.29	0.54	2.34	2.54	4.50	1.82
Other Urban	1.32	1.29	3.64	0.30	0.39	1.67	1.19	2.59	
Urban Core	1.36	1.32	2.89	0.25	0.39	1.43	2.41	2.94	1.77
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	1.34	1.30	2.75	0.25	0.43	1.57	1.58	3.02	1.76
Yes	1.72	1.65	5.93	0.33	0.59	1.39	4.34	2.84	0.99
% Households Linguistically Isolated in ZCTA									
Low	1.03	0.96	4.58	0.18	0.63	1.04	1.33	2.29	1.64
Medium	1.58	1.53	3.36	0.27	0.48	1.77	2.04	3.21	2.03
High	1.53	1.50	2.31	0.30	0.33	1.66	2.80	3.24	1.01
Spending per student in thousands									
Low	1.13	1.08	3.43	0.16	0.36	1.21	2.89	2.38	1.51
Medium	1.58	1.52	5.03	0.30	0.58	1.66	1.84	3.34	2.66
High	1.56	1.56	1.51	0.32	0.50	1.84	1.30	3.32	1.33
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	1.40	1.35	3.15	0.24	0.44	1.56	2.65	2.97	2.28
No	1.41	1.41	na	0.32	0.50	1.42	1.24	2.99	1.01

Table 11a: OSPI, Number Of Students With Chronic Truancy Not Filed On

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	23177	21527	1650	2217	192	2864	649	17131	124
2004	22752	21430	1322	1931	103	2491	699	17370	158
2005	25225	23547	1678	2031	201	2290	639	19782	282
2006	30375	28133	2242	1417	236	2372	896	24972	482
School Location by RUCA									
Isolated Rural	2309	2287	22	181	37	348	275	1382	86
Small Rural	2868	2557	311	169	209	178	103	2120	89
Large Rural	5890	5343	547	709	223	573	342	3866	177
Other Urban	8849	7920	929	940	54	707	533	6615	0
Urban Core	81613	76530	5083	5597	209	8211	1630	65272	694
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	80227	74595	5632	6109	576	8125	2506	62184	727
Yes	21302	20042	1260	1487	156	1892	377	17071	319
Weapons Incidents									
Low	19046	18125	921	1468	377	1478	820	14844	59
Medium	28790	26604	2186	1535	166	2631	1262	22994	202
High	53693	49908	3785	4593	189	5908	801	41417	785

Table 11b: OSPI, Rates Of Students With Chronic Truancy Not Filed On (% Of Enrollment)

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	2.63	2.51	7.35	0.59	0.76	1.62	2.90	6.26	2.09
2004	2.53	2.43	6.35	0.49	0.44	1.37	3.46	6.26	2.23
2005	2.96	2.83	9.24	0.54	0.86	1.36	3.30	7.76	4.65
2006	3.40	3.22	10.65	0.37	0.95	1.36	4.64	8.83	7.56
School Location by RUCA									
Isolated Rural	2.27	2.27	1.68	0.53	0.40	3.19	1.59	5.60	1.45
Small Rural	2.39	2.18	12.30	0.40	4.62	0.76	2.55	4.81	6.42
Large Rural	2.33	2.14	15.10	0.72	2.26	1.11	5.69	4.74	2.98
Other Urban	2.03	1.85	12.33	0.52	0.38	0.75	5.42	4.91	
Urban Core	3.12	3.00	7.53	0.48	0.35	1.58	3.70	8.12	6.42
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	2.77	2.64	7.82	0.45	0.76	1.46	3.61	7.53	3.27
Yes	3.41	3.26	12.11	0.81	0.73	1.32	3.18	6.50	9.89
Weapons Incidents									
Low	1.94	1.88	4.18	0.36	1.12	0.80	2.32	4.81	0.58
Medium	2.33	2.21	6.58	0.29	0.47	1.02	4.56	6.04	3.23
High	4.13	3.92	13.90	0.78	0.67	2.29	4.38	10.38	8.67

Implementing the Becca laws required coordination between schools, parents, courts and youth. That some areas are stricter about filing petitions than others may have much to do with how these groups communicate, or systems limitations that make following the law challenging. Therefore, the next section explores how those who are affected by or work with chronic absentees think about Becca as a system for re-engaging youth with school.

What Good Kids?

Interviews with community members included two attorneys, one with the King County Prosecutor’s office and another with the American Civil Liberties Union. Four people who work within their districts to re–engage chronically absent youth were interviewed. The titles varied, from Student Advocate to Truancy Services Facilitator or some form of liaison, but the job descriptions were very similar. Two heads of anti–truancy efforts were interviewed, and four social workers that are connected with those efforts. One of the legislators behind the initial Becca legislation agreed to participate, as did the head of a parent support group. A case manager for Becca within the court system participated, as did four teachers in the schools where the photography

project was held. In all, 4 men and 16 women were participated, three of whom were African–American.

All parents were mothers, with one African–American. While not asked explicitly about their economic status, two indicated that they worked nonprofessional jobs, one was disabled, two worked with youth in their positions and the others were professional and middle class. Between them, they discussed experience with their ten children.

While the phrase "keeping the good kids good" was used for describing where Becca works well, those who work most closely with chronic absentees said it is difficult to typify truants. One asked: "Well, what's a truant kid, really?" and others said that while there are patterns, categorization is a disservice. There is no one model for a student who skips school, whether once or multiple times. A social worker admitted that she began in her position thinking that they would "fix the bad apples" in the school system, but quickly realized that most chronic absentees live complex, difficult lives. Other adults in the study echoed the assessment that chronic absenteeism is never just about skipping school.

The "good kids" that respond to the threat of court or an initial hearing in a Becca process are not usually heavily involved with drugs, gangs or crime but often are anxious, depressed, ill or trying to cope with undiagnosed learning disabilities. Common disabilities are dyslexia or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) but social workers were sensitive to more subtlety. One defined learning disability as anything that stands in the way of attendance. Mundane barriers include needing an alarm clock, staying up too late, or not eating properly. More complex barriers are social anxiety, depression, mobility and social isolation. When most youth report friends as a prime reason for school attendance, those who lack friends are most at risk. Family situations contribute to unexcused absences when students are caretakers for other family members, or essential services such as water or heat are lacking, causing embarrassment at school. Parents reported that extreme perfectionism and fear of failure or embarrassment fed into anxiety over school. Some youth could not get up and face the day. They slept all day, stayed home and "didn't move," or watched television. Even if up, students would contrive to miss the bus, or, if rides were offered, refuse to ride. For these youth —considered the "good" ones — if they could make it to school,

they would stay there. They were not rebellious and did not misbehave once in class.

Many of the "not–so–good" youth have more difficult barriers. Community workers talked about the "life–changing circumstances" of youth in truancy cases. A combination of environment and temperament, family situations, gang membership, pregnancy, drug and/or alcohol abuse interfered with school. Even if they made it through the door, they wandered off at lunch or connected with friends who were skipping. Several parents said that youth would congregate in nearby houses where no adults were home, in order to use drugs. Homelessness was another reason for chronic truancy. Parents may not be aware of the rights to education that exist for homeless families. Youth that leave home find education difficult, as they have more concerns such as avoiding abuse, maintaining addiction, pregnancy or any combination of these and other factors. Gang membership pulls youth away from school. While one teacher knew of a dedicated student changing clothes three times to make it to school safely across different gang territories, the friends, excitement and money that gangs offer often eclipse the longer–term promise of an education.

It would be a disservice to the youth and parents interviewed to try to classify any of the students or their experiences using the schema of "good" and "not–so–good" students. However, much of what they had to say expands and add details to observations from others working on truancy.

Parents' Descriptions Of Their Children

One common observations parents made was that their child "just didn't care" as they entered adolescence. Children backed away from activities they previously enjoyed and became aloof or unresponsive. They gave up easily, or became defiant and "sassy." Some never liked school. Others were not in trouble legally, nor appearing to use drugs or alcohol. One mother said, "He's been sitting around for two years and he's not doing anything and he doesn't want to get a job and he doesn't want to go to school." Another parent was clear that her kids "do not have learning disabilities, they have laziness, they have I–don't–want–to–do–this syndrome." She believed that youth need as much help getting motivated for school as adults do for work.

Some youth simply did not value education. The only reasons one youth went to school were to get his allowance, keep his cell phone and avoid “hassle” from his mother. The power of her “hassling” him was not enough for him to stop smoking marijuana, but it did keep him in school. Some teens were described as “too smart,” they thought themselves cleverer than everyone around them and therefore did not need to respect others. Parents mentioned self–containment, perfectionism and internal motivation as factors in their child’s absences. Punishments did not deter, rewards did not encourage, and agreements were routinely broken. They contrasted these children with siblings who were easier to communicate and work with. Only age, and, in some cases, court supervision and/or juvenile detention made a difference.

Most parents reached out for help either early in their child's life, or as school problems mounted. They tried counseling, testing, checking for learning disabilities, tutoring. Many youth did not cooperate, since in Washington those 13 years and older have the right to obtain (and refuse) health and counseling services. Parents expressed frustration at what they saw as an imbalance between rights and responsibilities in that youth have many rights in Washington without necessarily having the ability to act responsibly. Parents said that rights should be tempered with common sense, “it’s not just all rights.” Some tried prayers. As one mother said, these consisted mostly of “Oh God! Help her! Help me! Help her! Help me!” Many felt nothing worked. One said her attempts to reach out never yielded any “help that helped” and wondered if she had gone about it correctly. They felt limited in their abilities to address their children’s behavior.

Interlinked with parents' descriptions of their sons and daughters were accounts of their circumstances. There was no truant youth who did not have *something* going on. One boy was bullied at school, and the situation was handled, but the teasing a girl received started a cycle of behavior that worsened until she was in trouble with the law. One youth lost a friend to murder and another lost a friend to disease. One child had Crohn's disease and his sibling, Pott’s, conditions with symptoms that make attendance difficult. These children survived tricky surgery, their own illnesses, death threats, parent disability, rape, parent disease, family homelessness and sibling suicide attempts. One mother said her daughter had something go wrong every spring for the last five years.

While cutting school is not the answer from an adult perspective, there are clear reasons why school is not a welcoming place to be based on a youth's situation. This allows other places to compete with school as places for adolescents to hang out in and engage with.

The Experience Of Truancy

Just as there is no one type of truant youth, there is no standard destination when skipping school. Some stayed home. One younger son would plead "I don't feel good" and his mother, sympathetic to his fear of bullying, excused him as long as he kept his academics up (which he did). Technically, he was not skipping school and other parents sometimes excused their children when they could not face school.

Skipping school started at different grades, from the start of middle school to the last years of high school. Once begun, students fell into a pattern of avoiding school. One boy missed 3 to 5 days a week throughout the school year, with some classes having over 30 absences. Another missed six straight months of high school. One had two bouts of cutting school, with the last and largest having 22 days absent out of one trimester. A mother with two sons discovered one had over 90 absences at an alternative school, while the other was missing from school and home for three months. One girl had thirty or more unexcused absences.

Drugs and alcohol use and abuse are often cited as a reason that children start cutting school or are suspended. Community workers talked about how middle school students are especially vulnerable, and how truancy is one effect of drug abuse. As one mother said, "when [my son] is out of school, he is getting high". But some students met friends and did drugs at school.

People who work closely with students see the effects of gangs in drug abuse, prostitution and violence, especially the loss of friends. Two sentiments about gangs were expressed, the first as “if momma don’t love you, the gang will,” confirming ideas of kids joining gangs because of bad home lives. But the other was that it’s “not that mom and dad *don’t* love them, but you know? The gang *will*.” Friends, “coolness,” money and lower expectations than home draw youth into gangs, and they stay because it’s exciting and fun.

For a few, gangs are a solution to questions of identity apparent in the children of the parents interviewed. The mother of two adopted sons told how they were Native and Cuban, not Black, although everyone thinks of them as African–American. Two daughters were mixed–race, and the problem of knowing which table to pick in 7th grade bothered both children. One opted to make a goal of being the most popular girl, the other, shyer, became completely alienated in high school. Another adopted girl did not adjust to the "dog–eat–dog" hierarchy and teasing of middle school. She "lost sight of her strengths," started off complaining about the rude kids in middle school, and then decided to become the rudest child of all.

Parents were clear about their sons' and daughters' stories regarding truancy, and students in the study offered additional insights into reasons, destinations and consequences for skipping school.

Student Perspectives On Cutting School

One student who had not cut school declared it was "dumb" and several mentioned their mothers pushing them to get to class. Several admitted to being absent for "weeks at a time" and one said her absence records were a "big old ginormous book." Some students skipped certain classes, but remained at school. One who said he never cut was conspicuously absent from the photography class many times, but insisted he was either "in the building" or "sick." A young woman said she had cut classes with a friend, but only missed "10 minutes. Or 5. Well, 10. Or 15" to indicate that it was not consequential for her or her academics. At the other end of the spectrum, a student wondered if daydreaming in class was like cutting, did that count?

Reasons for absences usually involved relationships. Several skipped going to class in one school to visit a previous school, when transfers left them lonely and "homesick" for their old friends. Some said they were being picked on, or had personal problems that interfered with their willingness to go to school. One missed school to care for a younger sibling when her mother went to work. Another admitted that skipping school was part of trying on a new persona, part of a process of changing herself from nerdy and quiet to someone

new and different. A young woman said that she and her siblings were "hotheaded" — they all got in trouble at school, they all had tempers, but they were "not doing anything" to warrant getting in trouble. Another student said that he and others usually cut school to "go places and do things," which, off–tape, he said was code for hanging out and doing drugs.

But students also spoke of systemic difficulties. Two reported long searches to find new schools after leaving old ones. Expulsion in one case made it difficult to find a school that would accept the student, but another student described missing school for medical reasons. The search for a new school after her surgery took over a month.

Where did they go? A couple of students stayed home or went to friends and relatives' houses, but most were not in a familial setting when absent. Four youth avoided particular classes, or experimented with skipping school by hiding on school property. One said she started by walking around hallways, avoiding certain students, without even thinking about it as skipping. Other schools and old friends drew students out of their approved school to visit another. One student went with several others to the parking lot; another went to portables and other areas not covered by security cameras.

Off-campus, the quiet atmosphere and computers in public libraries attracted two students. Others went to the mall, or shopping centers, places with "good stuff to eat." One student went "everywhere" — community centers, downtown and walking around.

Consequences for skipping school at first consisted of mostly, being "yelled at" by parents or grandparents, or a talking–to by the principal. Repeated skipping brought grounding. One said that her trips to the nurse's office might count, and that she did not know what skipping was at the time she did it. One of the young men also used the nurse's office as a way of avoiding particular people, but his mother supported his actions and he was not considered absent without cause. Another skipped many days of school but, because it was a school that did not take attendance, he never experienced any consequences from the school nor from his parent (who was not aware of the absences at the time).

Photography Class Results

Many took pictures of their homes and spoke about the comfort of the spaces they chose. One student like the "quiet, peaceful" back garden of a grandparent's house, with its decorative wooden bridge, roses, high protective fence and vegetable plot. Bedrooms were popular, as sanctuaries and social sites for sleepovers or hanging out. One student was due to move soon, and her photo reflected the important items in her life — her posters, a drawing by her father. Younger siblings included in these pictures came with descriptions of how well behaved they were (or not) with regard to the student's privacy and material goods. Desired places showed up as photos of a "green" condo development, and the student was eager to discuss how ecologically friendly the condos were. He had gone inside one to see it and said the development helped the neighborhood "clean up." He liked his area now where before it had seemed dangerous. That danger was not altogether gone. He described a tree in their yard "where cars always crash" that had been hit twice already in spite of boulders. The tree died, as did his cat, which featured in his images. The photographs of people that students selected as subjects were tied to place. Siblings in the bedroom, friends on the street, on the porch, in the alley, girlfriends and boyfriends all reflected the importance of family and friends. Students excelled at catching intimate, unguarded moments on film.

Few students took self–portraits. Those that were shared were reflections off a car or mirror, with the student's back turned or looking away from the lens. These contrasted with the more direct pictures of friends.

Youth took more photos at home than not, although one peripatetic student took photographs from the many places she visited throughout Seattle. A community center, described by one student as "the" place to be, featured in his work as a safe place to meet friends, play basketball or other sports. Given that he was endangered by his brothers' gang activity, the center was his haven. School as an important place showed up in the photograph of an 8th grade graduation certificate that was framed and hanging on a living room wall. This student also took pictures of the "levels chart" at the school, with its colors that represented increasing levels of trust and good behavior.

Comments from students indicated that most enjoyed the photography class. Some had taken photography classes before, some had not. While several indicated that they "loved" the class, and were "addicted to taking pictures," most said it was a "nice, good class." One was delighted that random photos could turn out well, and another wished the class did not have to end. A few of the students' work went above and beyond in terms of subject, framing and quality. For these students, we provided information on other community youth photography efforts in Seattle and encouraged them to apply. While this is not even enough support, it was what we could do, showing them the websites, discussing their talent and encouraging them to pursue their interest in photography.

While they could have much in common with parents and students around the state, the experiences recounted from these interviews were particular to a large urban area. To broaden the study, the OSPI data was used to look at how truancy varies at the school level throughout the state.

OSPI Students With Unexcused Absences Model Results

Model details for Students with Unexcused Absences are available in Tables 10a and details for Students with Ten+ Unexcused Absences in Tables 11a. As before, the tables shown here display the models for all years. Other models are available in the Appendix 4, where Tables 10b and 11b compare the full district model results to the regular schools only model and middle school/high school models for Students with Unexcused Absences and Students withTen+ Unexcused Absences, respectively. Tables 10c and 11c in Appendix 4 compare the full district model results to the individual year models, again for Students with Unexcused Absences and Students with Ten+ Unexcused Absences, respectively.

As a reminder, the Student model contains variables pertaining to the student population, the School model added school measures, the Close model included block group and ZCTA information. Local context used the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas to classify schools, and the District model added district-wide measures.

Table 12a: OSPI SUA Main Model Results[1]

SUA		Student	School	Close	Local	District
N		6298	6237	6237	6216	6215
missing		449	510	510	531	532
Parameter	DF	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P	exp(b) P
Intercept	1	0.223****	0.090****	0.093****	0.078****	0.087****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.920	0.925	0.916	0.920	0.915
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.893*	0.894*	0.876*	0.869**	0.861**
2006-07 (03-04)	1	0.957	0.931	0.907	0.908	0.933
% Hisp (white)	1	1.003*	0.999	1.005*	1.005*	1.004
% Black (white)	1	1.003	1.006*	1.008**	1.007*	1.011**
% Other (white)	1	1.006****	1.004*	1.006****	1.007***	1.008****
% Male	1	0.994	1.004	1.005	1.004	1.004
% FRM	1	1.006****	1.015****	1.013****	1.014****	1.014****
StdPerTch	1		1.003	1.003	1.002	1.000
AvgYrEdExp	1		0.986*	0.982**	0.985*	0.987
%TchMD	1		0.998	0.999	0.999	0.999
Sch Type (Reg.)	1		0.952	0.972	0.907	0.859
Elem-Mid (elem)	1		1.085	1.101	1.170	1.235*
Middle (elem)	1		2.096****	2.117****	2.122****	2.107****
Mid-High (elem)	1		2.959****	3.027****	3.240****	3.408****
High (elem)	1		4.606****	4.721****	4.807****	4.834****
Comp.	1		2.326****	2.272****	2.615****	3.006****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1		0.734****	0.732****	0.731****	0.752****
Yth Pov BG				1.000	1.000	1.000
PubAssist Z				1.017	1.016	1.006
RntHH Z				0.997	0.999	1.000
Yth Unemp Z				0.999	1.003	1.002
LngIso Z				0.970***	0.973**	0.979*
DV/SqMi				1.005*	1.004	1.004
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.794**	0.880
Small Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.863	0.898
Large Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.920	0.948
Other Urb. (Urb. Core)	1				1.297****	1.279***
Crime/100 enr.	1				1.004	1.008
Dist. Size						0.988*
Yth Prop Sd						1.010
MCFamPov Z						0.996
Yth Pov SD						0.998
$perStd (K)	1					0.975*
WpnsInc	1					1.237*
AltSch (none)	1					1.135*
Alpha	1	11.212 ****	7.386****	7.335****	7.216****	7.140****

[1] Year model omitted for space

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 13a: OSPI SUA10 Main Model Results[1]

SUA		Student	School	Close	Local	District
N		6569	6237	6237	6216	6215
missing		178	510	510	531	532
Parameter	DF	exp(B) P	exp(B) P	exp(B) P	exp(B) P	exp(B) P
Intercept	1	0.040****	0.001****	0.001****	0.001****	0.002****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.969	0.910	0.895*	0.896*	0.908
2005-06 (03-04)	1	1.111	0.964	0.930	0.917	0.938
2006-07 (03-04)	1	1.224**	0.915	0.864**	0.875*	0.948
% Hisp (white)	1	1.002	1.001	1.010****	1.008****	1.006**
% Black (white)	1	1.002	1.000	0.999	0.995*	1.000
% Other (white)	1	1.007****	1.011****	1.014****	1.015****	1.016****
% Male	1	0.994	1.007	1.008	1.009	1.011
% FRM	1	1.008****	1.030****	1.028****	1.029****	1.030****
StdPerTch	1		1.009*	1.007	1.003	0.999
AvgYrEdExp	1		1.008	0.998	1.005	1.009
%TchMD	1		0.997*	0.999	0.999	1.000
Sch Type (Reg.)	1		2.077****	2.196****	1.786****	1.663****
Elem-Mid (elem)	1		1.227*	1.369****	1.566****	1.676****
Middle (elem)	1		4.649****	4.771****	4.896****	4.846****
Mid-High (elem)	1		8.022****	8.665****	10.544****	11.195****
High (elem)	1		22.754****	24.243****	25.995****	26.120****
Comp.	1		5.405****	5.435****	7.691****	9.393****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1		0.760****	0.758****	0.760****	0.776****
Yth Pov BG				1.000	1.001	1.001
PubAssist Z	1			1.033**	1.028*	1.007
RntHH Z	1			0.996*	0.998	0.999
Yth Unemp Z	1			0.992*	1.002	0.997
LngIso Z	1			0.944****	0.953****	0.969***
DV/SqMi	1			1.018****	1.015****	1.015****
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.483****	0.570****
Small Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.709***	0.751**
Large Rur. (Urb. Core)	1				0.816**	0.847*
Other Urb. (Urb. Core)	1				1.211**	1.169*
Crime/100	1				1.004	1.006
Dist. Size	1					0.978****
Yth Prop SD	1					1.017*
MCFamPov Z	1					0.987****
Yth Pov SD						0.998
$perStd (K)	1					0.933****
WpnsInc	1					1.228*
AltSch (none)	1					1.093
Alpha		43.799****	5.165****	4.897****	4.656****	4.498****

[1] Year model omitted for space

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Years

Differences in SUA due to the year of the data were only significant and important for 2005. This is not surprising since 2005 was the year of duplicate

reporting with a higher bad data exclusion rate than the other years. The effect reduced the SUA by approximately 10–15% for that year.

Year effects were more varied when examining students with ten or more unexcused absences. The year 2006 was significant and important in the Students and Context models, with the student model showing 1.2 times the odds of having SUA10 than the year 2003. Once contextual variables were added to the model, the odds dropped to 0.88. The year 2004 was significant and important in the context model, with odds of 0.88 compared to 2003, and in the district model, with odds of 0.90. Neither year was important in the regular–school and middle–high schools models.

Student Body

Many of these variables were significant but below the 5% cutoff in odds. For SUA, percent Hispanic was intermittently significant, and percent Black and percent Other are significant but not important in most models.

For SUA10, percent Hispanic was significant for the district and regular school models, percent Black was only significant for regular schools and middle–high school models, percent Other was significant in all models.

The percent of students receiving free or reduced meals is significant but not important in all models for both truancy measure. Generally, a 1% increase in any of these measures would increase SUA by a factors ranging from 1.01 to 1.02.

School

For overall truancy, the average years of educational experience for teachers was significant in school and context steps, although not in the full model. For chronic absenteeism, students per teacher and percent of teachers with a Masters degree were significant in the school model. The Students per teacher ratio was also significant in the middle–high school model. Otherwise, academic support measures were neither significant nor important.

Surprisingly, school type was neither significant nor important for truancy in any model except the one restricted to middle and high school grades, where alternative schools were 0.8 times as likely to have students with unexcused absences as regular schools. For SUA10, however, school type was significant

and important in all models, with regular schools having from 0.5 to 0.7 the odds of having chronic truants as alternative schools.

The odds of schools having students with any truancy increased with higher grade levels, compared to elementary schools. The possibility of students with unexcused absences rose from elementary to high school in the full and regular–only models (1.1 up to 5.2), with comprehensive schools on a par with middle schools. Using elementary schools as the omitted category, schools serving elementary to middle grades were 1.1–1.3 times as likely to have unexcused absences. Schools serving middle and middle to high school grades were 2.1 and 3.0–3.4 times as likely and high schools had 4.6–4.9 times the odds of having students with unexcused absences as elementary schools in most models. The 2006–07 model had 4.7 and 5.2 times the odds for middle–high and high schools. Comprehensive schools are much like middle schools, with 2.4–3.1 the odds in all but the 2006–07 model, where the odds jumped to 4.0. When comparing only schools serving middle and high schools grades, the odds decrease as grades go down from the omitted high school category, in keeping with the overall grades results.

Schools serving elementary to middle grades had up to 1.7 times the likelihood of chronic truancy through the full model, 1.9 times in the regular–school only model and 2.2 in 2006–07. Schools serving only middle grades had up to 4.9 times the likelihood in the full and regular–only models. When looking only regular schools, the odds for schools serving grades in middle to high schools were lower than in the full model, 10.6 vs. 11.6. High schools varied little, hovering around 26.4 the likelihood in the full and regular–schools models, although the 2006–07 model was 35.8 odds. When looking at only middle and high schools, using high school as the omitted category, middle–to–high and middle schools had 0.5 and 0.2 odds, respectively.

Schools that did not have anti–truancy programs had 20–25% less likelihood of having students with unexcused absences in all but the middle–high only model, where the odds were reduced by a factor of 0.89. For chronic absentees, the odds are similar in most models except in the middle–high school model, where this measure was not significant.

Close To School

None of the constructed contextual variables had any effects. For truancy, youth proportion, married couple family poverty, linguistic isolation and percent of households renting were significant in some of the year models, but not important. For chronic truancy, married couple family poverty, linguistic isolation and domestic violence orders per square mile were all significant in the context, district and regular models. Two of these, the poverty and violence measures, were also significant in the middle–high schools only model.

Local Context

The commuting zones showed fairly stable effects, with only one significant and important for truancy. Other Urban RUCA areas were 1.1–1.4 more likely to have students with unexcused absences than schools in the urban core in the full model. The Other Urban category describes places within commuting range of an urban core, such as North Bend, Vashon or Granite Falls. For chronic absenteeism, schools in small rural or isolated areas were around 0.6 less likely than schools in the Urban Core to have students with ten or more unexcused absences in the all–year models while increasing to 0.7 in the 2006–07 model. In the regular and middle–high only models, small rural areas also had 0.8 fewer odds of chronics absentees. Countering the trend of fewer odds with greater distance from the city, schools listed as Urban Other were 1.1–1.4 times as likely to have students with multiple absences schools in the Urban Core, except for the middle–high schools and 2006–07 models.

District

Spending per pupil was significant for truancy in the full and middle–high models, although the effect did not exceed the 5% criteria. In the district, middle–high schools and 2004–05 models, spending per pupil was associated with less chance of a school having chronic truancy, with 0.93 less likelihood for every thousand dollars per pupil. Spending was significant but not important in the regular–schools model.

Weapons incidents per 100 students were significant and important in all models for all truancy. For general absences, high incidents were associated with 1.2 more likelihood of having unexcused students and for chronic truancy, with 1.1–1.4 the odds in all but the 2006–2007 model, where the odds were 2.0 times as likely.

Finally, the measure of available alternative options was significant and important for truancy in only one model, the all years middle–high school only model, with schools having alternative or alternative plus home school having 1.2 times the likelihood of unexcused students as districts with home school only or none. For chronic truancy, the present of alternative schools or alternative plus home school was not significant or important in any model.

OSPI Summary for General and Chronic Truancy

As with petition measures, the grade levels served by the school, type of school and location showed the strongest effects across most of the models. The higher the grade levels served, the more unexcused absences and chronic truancy, and alternative schools were more likely to have students with 10 or more absences. Schools in Other Urban areas had higher unexcused absence rates and higher chronic absenteeism than those within Urban Core areas while schools in more rural areas had less chronic truancy. Schools with anti-truancy measures in place were more likely to experience higher truancy levels. Districts with higher numbers of weapons incidents were more likely to have general and chronic truancy. Finally, increased spending per pupil was related to lower general and chronic truancy rates.

These measures of unexcused absences and chronic absenteeism show general influential factors for schools, but they do not get at the details of school characteristics. It is worth asking about their characteristics that foster school attachment at the personal, idiosyncratic level and through surveying schools.

As before, the tables below report counts and rates for the significant and important variables from the models. Tables 14a-b show students with unexcused absences, followed by Tables 15a-b for students with ten or more unexcused absences.

Table 14a: OSPI, Number Of Students With Unexcused Absences[1]

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	260981	252897	8084	55647	4752	54736	7383	136448	2015
2004	254825	247788	7037	55257	3157	47567	6671	140499	1674
2005	241624	236066	5558	50851	3315	44706	6427	134705	1620
2006	267816	259829	7987	49475	4218	47147	7086	157448	2442
School Location									
Isolated Rural	28847	28671	176	5956	1330	3304	4984	11457	1816
Small Rural	33033	31877	1156	4394	1178	5729	1214	20052	466
Large Rural	77255	75435	1820	14576	3089	16101	2257	39737	1495
Other Urban	130789	127469	3320	29243	911	27017	4326	69135	157
Urban Core	755322	733128	22194	157061	8934	142005	14786	428719	3817
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	795888	772940	22948	171878	10568	150092	22915	433899	6536
Yes	229358	223640	5718	39352	4874	44064	4652	135201	1215
Weapons Incidents									
Low	245902	241158	4744	48298	5380	41070	10206	138980	1968
Medium	343461	331854	11607	57590	6398	65363	10281	201940	1889
High	435883	423568	12315	105342	3664	87723	7080	228180	3894
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	826851	798185	28666	173991	10281	160916	13622	463468	4573
No	198395	198395	0	37239	5161	33240	13945	105632	3178

Table 14b: OSPI, Students With Unexcused Absences Rates (% Of Enrollment)

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	29.64	29.48	36.03	14.79	18.86	30.88	33.00	49.90	33.88
2004	28.28	28.15	33.82	14.12	13.51	26.21	33.06	50.61	23.62
2005	28.39	28.34	30.60	13.41	14.15	26.60	33.16	52.85	26.69
2006	29.97	29.77	37.95	12.80	16.94	27.11	36.69	55.66	38.30
School Location									
Isolat. Rural	28.32	28.51	13.46	17.54	14.55	30.29	28.87	46.42	30.67
Small Rural	27.55	27.16	45.71	10.36	26.03	24.38	30.06	45.52	33.62
Large Rural	30.51	30.23	50.25	14.86	31.35	31.10	37.52	48.73	25.18
Other Urban	30.04	29.80	44.07	16.22	6.40	28.47	44.03	51.32	11.08
Urban Core	28.88	28.77	32.90	13.33	15.10	27.33	33.53	53.33	35.29
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	27.44	27.33	31.85	12.74	14.00	26.94	33.02	52.52	29.37
Yes	36.64	36.33	54.96	21.46	22.76	30.72	39.24	51.45	37.65
Weapons Incidents									
Low	24.95	25.03	21.54	11.72	15.97	22.15	28.90	45.01	19.33
Medium	27.72	27.52	34.96	10.83	18.21	25.41	37.18	53.01	30.25
High	33.49	33.24	45.23	17.89	13.05	34.00	38.72	57.17	43.01
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	29.55	29.39	34.77	13.91	17.96	28.37	31.80	53.46	35.04
No	27.27	13.22	na	13.02	24.90	36.31	47.60	25.57	

1 Significant and important variables only
Low, medium, high categories represent 0-33rd, 33rd-66th, 66th-100th percentiles

Table 15a: OSPI, Number Of Students With 10+ Unexcused Absences

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	32356	30180	2176	2869	274	5241	937	22848	187
2004	33177	31134	2043	2660	154	4609	1044	24451	259
2005	36748	34685	2063	2855	291	4325	960	27932	385
2006	42631	39842	2789	2136	350	4437	1236	33917	555
School Location									
Isolat. Rural	3280	3215	65	247	97	428	442	1893	173
Small Rural	4236	3803	433	256	232	430	152	3058	108
Large Rural	10262	9547	715	865	264	1404	471	6984	274
Other Urban	14008	12881	1127	1360	95	2036	631	9886	0
Urban Core	113126	106395	6731	7792	381	14314	2481	87327	831
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	114042	106791	7251	8527	801	14960	3448	85259	1047
Yes	30870	29050	1820	1993	268	3652	729	23889	339
% Households Linguistically Isolated in ZCTA									
Low	28075	26139	1936	1764	315	2654	1095	21800	447
Medium	46706	44457	2249	3090	428	6640	1423	34417	708
High	70131	65245	4886	5666	326	9318	1659	52931	231
Spending per student in thousands									
Low	43205	40393	2812	2851	236	5398	1441	33098	181
Medium	54980	51574	3406	4101	264	6990	1331	41511	783
High	46727	43874	2853	3568	569	6224	1405	34539	422
Weapons Incidents									
Low	30108	28556	1552	2084	480	3127	1292	22988	137
Medium	42986	40092	2894	2269	301	5457	1756	32940	263
High	1818	67193	4625	6167	288	10028	1129	53220	986
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	119754	110683	9071	8695	710	15854	2616	90809	1070
No	25158	25158	0	1825	359	2758	1561	18339	316

Table 15b: OSPI, Rates Of Students With 10+ Unexcused Absences (% Of Enrollment)

	All	Regular	Alter	Elem	ElemMid	Mid	MidHIgh	High	Comp
Years									
2003	3.68	3.52	9.70	0.76	1.09	2.96	4.19	8.36	3.14
2004	3.68	3.54	9.82	0.68	0.66	2.54	5.17	8.81	3.66
2005	4.32	4.16	11.36	0.75	1.24	2.57	4.95	10.96	6.34
2006	4.77	4.57	13.25	0.55	1.41	2.55	6.40	11.99	8.70
School Location by RUCA									
Isolated Rural	3.22	3.20	4.97	0.73	1.06	3.92	2.56	7.67	2.92
Small Rural	3.53	3.24	17.12	0.60	5.13	1.83	3.76	6.94	7.79
Large Rural	4.05	3.83	19.74	0.88	2.68	2.71	7.83	8.56	4.61
Other Urban	3.21	3.01	14.96	0.75	0.67	2.15	6.42	7.34	
Urban Core	4.32	4.18	9.98	0.66	0.64	2.75	5.63	10.86	7.68
AntiTruancy Efforts									
No	3.93	3.78	10.06	0.63	1.06	2.68	4.97	10.32	4.71
Yes	4.93	4.72	17.49	1.09	1.25	2.55	6.15	9.09	10.51
% Households Linguistically Isolated in ZCTA									
Low	2.86	2.71	11.32	0.41	1.01	1.38	4.31	7.61	3.72
Medium	3.64	3.55	7.64	0.58	1.53	2.48	3.77	8.57	7.96
High	5.55	5.31	13.61	1.01	0.86	3.89	9.18	13.21	5.08
Spending per student in thousands									
Low	3.27	3.12	10.95	0.49	0.66	2.02	5.24	8.12	3.69
Medium	4.32	4.14	13.92	0.74	1.00	2.68	6.08	10.35	13.68
High	5.01	4.87	8.83	0.89	1.65	3.62	4.41	12.33	2.84
Weapons Incidents									
Low	3.06	2.96	7.05	0.51	1.42	1.69	3.66	7.44	1.35
Medium	3.47	3.32	8.72	0.43	0.86	2.12	6.35	8.65	4.21
High	5.51	5.27	16.99	1.05	1.03	3.89	6.18	13.33	10.89
Alternative Schools Available									
Yes	4.28	4.08	11.00	0.69	1.24	2.80	6.11	10.47	8.20
No	3.46	3.46	na	0.65	0.91	2.07	4.06	8.26	2.54

School Background

For most students, the alternative schools served as way stations between regular school assignments. Goals in both schools included teaching appropriate classroom behavior and emotional/behavioral control. Most students were there for behavioral reasons (fighting being most common). Six out of the ten had skipped some school time. The other four said they had not, although one young man who said this was often absent from class. Three found that alternative school was an educational niche they liked and did not expect to transfer anytime soon.

Study Classroom Experience And School Contrasts

Both schools were located on main thoroughfares with bus stops nearby. Both were designed to educate children who were not fitting in well with traditional school populations. Both had staff whose dedication, patience and concern were evident. Beyond these surface similarities, the schools contrasted in concepts of an attractive school environment.

Union Gap was located in a building housing other community efforts (artists, social welfare agencies, youth outreach) and held three rooms and an office. With all forty–plus students present, they crowded the largest room. During class changes and lunch, students were cheerfully noisy, for the most part, bombarding the teachers with questions before settling down for the next class. The teachers held an authoritative stance, and the students called them "Miss". They drew a clear line between themselves and students in terms of authority. One teacher clearly referred to her charges as "children", and the students not only did not seem to mind this, they respected her. Usually applied to parenting style, an authoritative approach is neither authoritarian nor permissive but aims for having a close relationship with youth while keeping high expectations for them (Pellerin, 2005). Several commented in interviews that this school was fair, a quality the teachers took pains to create. Locks on the doors controlled access to classrooms from to the main hall, but anyone could leave and knock to get back in. The walls displayed artwork and announcements.

At Pine Grove, the school's location on the second floor effectively isolated the site from other tenants. A metal detector and buzz–in door controlled access. Larger, with more rooms and a lunchroom that did not double as a classroom, the school was nearly empty. The truancy rate was much higher here (at least 50%, every day) compared to Union Gap (around 10%). Students were older and often involved with the juvenile justice system. At Union Gap, we were given the last slot of the day, while at Pine Grove the classes started at 8:30 in the morning, which made a difference for attendance. Of the 13 students assigned at Union Gap, we met all of them and most attended the class for the 12 weeks it ran. At Pine Grove, there were a couple of students we never met, and half the class attended once or at most twice. Starting in the early morning (early

for adolescents) meant that many of those who did show up came in only to nap at their desks.

Student Regular School Experience

When asked about their experience with regular school most students had specific remarks about what made school a good, or bad, place to be. Two felt constricted by the rules in regular school. After that, in increasing order, comments about drama, fairness, size issues and teachers were the rule.

According to the Urban Dictionary (http://www.urbandictionary.com), "drama" is catch–all term used to describe situations with easy, good outcomes that are dealt with, instead, by conflict, altercations, rumors and gossip. Youth did not liking having to defend against comments made about clothing, fighting gossip, fighting people, feeling forced into confrontation, gang related activities and the general distractions of "too much going on."

Most felt that regular schools were too big. It was too easy to get lost and too hard to find classes. One student thought that the odds of "screwing up" were higher in a big school because there were more people to connect with who could "screw up."

Issues of overall fairness were important. Many said they had seen or experienced forms of racism, with white kids sitting up front and black kids sitting in the back. One observed that although "everyone had the same problems," the adults only pay attention to some. They objected to being lumped in some group based on the actions of a few. Most said some variation of "sometimes it's not fair," although only a few offered concrete examples.

A few remarked on teachers in general not paying attention to them, focusing on smarter or whiter kids, and teachers or administrators being "mean" or "picking on" them. Several had very specific grievances about specific teachers who lost their homework, forcing them to redo assignments or marked them absent when they were there. Some teachers made inappropriate remarks such as "why did you even come" and "why don't you go back where you came from." As one young woman wondered, "Who says this to 6th graders? Who says this at all?" They noted that it takes a lot to get a teacher in trouble.

For those that could find something good to say about their schools, the responses split evenly between being with friends and having teachers they liked and/or friends in the administration. Two cited an office buddy who helped deal with difficult teachers. One student loved the academics. Others mentioned that they liked school trips and looked forward to them.

Student Alternative School Experience

Students had fewer criticisms of the alternative schools, and those were less teacher–oriented. Alternative schools serve a wide age–range, and older students complained about the immaturity of the younger ones, while younger adolescents felt that older students tried to boss them around. The change of staff at Pine Grove occurred with a change in rules, and the students there felt that the new rules (no headphones in class, no in–and–out privileges) were unfair compared to the prior year. Yet one student admitted to abusing the freedom at another alternative school he'd attended, since there were no consequences when he cut class or school. The Pine Grove site's metal detector prompted one student to say she felt "locked, caged." Some students were bored, another catch phrase (like drama) that can indicate being disengaged or feeling devalued (Henry, 2007b; Hirschman, et al., 2006; Kearney, 2008; Reid, 2008). But the consensus was something like "bored, but ok." The only complaint about teachers was that they would sometimes take out their disagreements on the students.

Students liked the atmosphere, the lack of drama, the small community, and the different age groups. Alternative schools seemed friendlier, with no fighting and no worries. Students liked that the academics offered opportunities for extra credit and learning quickly through the paced instruction. Several students said that teachers would look out for them. Another appreciated taking a quick break when having a bad day or developing a bad attitude. In talking about a different alternative school, one student stressed how much she liked the emphasis on her culture that the school provided, in contrast to regular schools. A young mother said she liked the school as a second home. It represented a safe place to show "another side" of herself, and she valued it as her main opportunity to go out.

Comments from students, parents, teachers and community workers were combined with known school characteristics that can affect school attachment for the survey of Washington principals. The survey, like the OSPI data, provides a broader base for examining how school environment can affect student attachment.

Survey Analysis Results

Descriptives

Weighted and unweighted means and frequencies for the dependent variables are shown in Table 16. Unless otherwise noted, the weighted results are discussed below.

Table 16: Survey Dependent Variables Summary Statistics

Weighted N=354

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Skew	Min	Max	Rate	
SUA	212.0	294.2	15.6	-	0	1656	34.8	% of enrollment
SUA10	32.9	66.2	3.5	-	0	378	5.4	% of enrollment
TP	12.5	23.6	1.3	-	0	153	2.0	% of enrollment
CNF	20.9	51.1	2.7	-	0	361	63.5	% of SUA10
TotEnr	608.5	474.3	25.2	-	11	2511		

Unweighted N=354

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	Skew	Min	Max	Rate	
SUA	154.0	246.2	13.1	2.9	0	1656	30.1	% of enrollment
SUA10	22.0	52.9	2.8	4.0	0	378	4.3	% of enrollment
TP	8.8	19.8	1.1	4.3	0	153	1.7	% of enrollment
CNF	13.7	40.1	2.1	5.1	0	361	62.1	% of SUA10
TotEnr	511.9	398.7	21.2	2.0	11	2511		

The dependent variables are an average of the OSPI data over the four years available for each school, shown as counts and as rates based on enrollment. The average number of students with unexcused absences from 2003-4 through 2006-7 for schools that responded was 212 per school, or 34.8% of students enrolled (154.0 and 30.1% unweighted). Students with ten or more unexcused absences represented 5.4% of enrollment, an average of 32.9 per school (22 and 4.3% unweighted). Survey schools filed truancy petitions on an

average of 12.5 students per school, or 2% of enrollment (8.8 and 1.7% unweighted).

For the survey analysis, the Chronic Not Filed is treated as it was for the OSPI data, representing the difference between those with 10 or more unexcused absences and the number of petitions filed. This was on average 20.9 per school, or 63.5% of theoretically possible filings (13.7 and 62.1%, unweighted).

Survey response frequencies are available in Table 23, parts I-IV, in Appendix 4.

Regular elementary schools (serving grades 5 or 6) made up around a third of the survey respondents (32.7%). Middle and high schools were another 58.6%, with alternative schools the least in number (8.7%). Most responding schools were in an Urban Core (63.2%) with Rural schools next (23%), and Other Urban the least represented (13.8%). About a third (34.0%) of the schools had some form of anti-truancy measure.

Schools with high infrastructure or teaching equipment needs made up 20.3% of the respondents. Although most elementary schools have a late start, middle and high schools did not, with only 15.0% of regular higher grade schools starting after 8:30 a.m. Alternative schools started late more often (35.8%) but the majority had an early start. In high schools and middle schools, the majority (74.7%) did not have any homeroom (53.1% for alternative schools, 34.3% for regular schools).

Most schools had a PTA (69.6%). Only a quarter (25.8%) of schools had no form of student-parent events, and a majority had family events (57.9%). In spite of complaints about parent non-involvement in interviews, most schools (77.2%) felt that the parents were supportive.

Many schools (66.0%) used any and all possible discipline techniques, with the next highest category being those that focus on in and out of school detention and suspension (27.3%). The classes for student misbehavior indicated that the majority of schools had low conflict (41.4%) while about the same number had actions that could be construed as 'acting up' (39.2%). The remaining respondents (19.4%) were high conflict schools, with regular and serious events. Schools that allowed off-campus lunches were only 13.5% of the respondents.

Virtually all schools had some form of visitor monitoring, but 45.4% did not use cameras or security staff.

Schools with sports and other activities, and aid if necessary, constituted 61.7% of the respondents. Another quarter (24.6%) had more non-sports activities that were less affordable. The remaining 13.7% schools were also activity-oriented, but these activities were more affordable. Only a small number of schools (6.6%) did not offer some form of homework help, and those that did provided assistance mainly in school. About half of schools did not have drug or alcohol counselors (49.5%). Those that did tended to have them more often available (27.5% for 2-5 times a week) than not. Many schools felt that they had no possibly insensitive teachers (29.8%), but 51% reported having at least 1 or 2, and 19.2% said that 3 or more teachers could benefit from some form of sensitivity training. Most schools provided support for transferring students (81.9%).

For most schools (39.8%), the minimum amount of time for reporting an unexcused absence to OSPI was missing part of the school day (but more than missing a class). Missing a full day was the next highest category (31.0%). Since late-to-class was the minimum for only 4.4% of the schools, this category was combined with missing class, so that tardy or missing class was the minimum reporting absence for 29.2% of schools. Policies around unexcused absences can be grouped by whether they are more or less punitive. About a third (31.6%) of school had stronger penalties for absences. Of the ways that schools can notify parents of their child's unexcused absence, a majority (54.1%) did so in a more personalized fashion than the others. While most schools informed students about attendance and Becca laws in a multitude of ways (59.2%), many responded that they did this in "other ways" than provided on the survey (32.7%) and some did not bother (8.1%).

There are valid reasons for not filing a truancy petition on eligible students. Student illness was tied with improved attendance as the leading reasons for not filing (76.2% marked it as 'important'). Aging out of the system and student transfer were the next important categories (46.1% and 43.3%, respectively). Both parents and students who are hard to locate impede filing, and these were marked important in 29.5% and 25.8% of the schools,

respectively. Students' grade improvement was only important for 22.2% of the schools, and cost was rarely a factor (9.4%).

Survey Modeling Results

As with the OSPI data, the criteria for determining the variables that mattered included tests of significance and the log likelihood. The test for significance was set to less than 0.5, and the cutoff for likelihood was set at 1.05 and 0.95 to measure increased or decreased probability. When discussing the results, significance is set at the 95% confidence level, and the term "important" refers to log likelihoods that are 1.05 and greater, or 0.95 and less.

Results are presented below grouped by the dependent variable. The modeling started with survey variables and latent classes, then added OSPI data averaged over the four years available. A comparison of the full models for three of the four dependent variables is provided below in Table 17a. (The individual model results for each dependent variable are in Appendix 4; Table 17b for Students with Unexcused Absences, Table 17c for Students with 10+ Unexcused Absences and Table 17d for Truancy Petitions.) Chronic Not Filed, the fourth dependent, used a different model. Results are in Table 18.

Students With Unexcused Absences

A number of variables were significant and important in the Classes model, but the effects were not present in the model with OSPI averages added. High needs schools were significant and important in the Classes model. The increased presence of drug and alcohol counselors was associated with higher truancy in the survey-only model, at 1.5 times the odds. Teacher insensitivity odds increased with category, up to 1.5 times the odds for schools with 3 or more compared to schools with none. Principals who felt they had supportive parents were 0.6 times as likely to have truant students as schools whose principals felt parents were not supportive.

In both models, alternative schools were significant and 2.3-2.7 times as likely to have any truancy as regular elementary schools. Although middle and high schools also had more likelihood, it was not significant. Schools that used less personal means of informing parents about their children's absences were

1.4-1.5 times as likely to have truant students as schools with more personal approaches.

Finally, schools that did not offer homework help were 1.6 times as likely to have unexcused absences as schools that did, in the model with OSPI data only.

Students With 10+ Unexcused Absences

When we turn to examining the models regarding students with 10 or more absences the differences between alternative and regular schools are once again much larger. In the classes model, alternative schools had 8.4 times the odds as elementary, increasing to 10.5 once OSPI information was included. Regular schools serving middle and high grades had greater odds (1.3-1.4), but these were not significant.

One variable was significant in the Classes model but not once OSPI was added. Schools that informed student of Becca in many ways were 1.6 more likely to have chronic absentees than school that did not inform students.

In both model, classes and OSPI, high needs schools were 2.0 and 1.7 times as likely as low needs schools to have chronic absentees. Those with drug and alcohol counselors frequently available were 1.7 and 1.5 times as likely as those with none. Teacher insensitivity was significant and important in both models, with increasing odds at higher categories. Schools with 1-2 had 1.5 and 1.4 the odds compared to schools with none, while those with 3 or more had 2.0 and 1.9 times the odds. Schools with high security in the form of cameras and staff were 1.9 (classes) and 1.7 (OSPI) times as likely as schools with low security. High parent support reduced the chances of chronic truants in both models (0.6 and 0.7), and less punitive policies for unexcused absences reduced the odds to 0.6 both models.

Table 17a: Survey Full Model Results for SUA, SUA10, TP

N= 289; Missing=65	SUA		SUA10		TP	
(ommitted categories in parentheses)	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	0.185	**	0.007	****	0.001	****
Alternative School (elementary)	2.693	**	10.457	****	10.87	****
Regular Middle-High (elementary)	1.336		1.409		2.202	**
High Needs Condition (low)	1.229		1.738	****	1.432	*
Earlier start time (later)	1.132		1.395	*	1.099	
Other activ., less affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	0.987		0.847		1.027	
Other activ., more affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	0.851		0.722		1.012	
Homework Help - Not Offered (offered)	1.652	*	1.414		1.429	
Drug & Alc. Counselors 2-5 x week (none)	1.335		1.539	**	1.533	*
Drug & Alc. Counselors 1-4 x month (none)	1.146		1.124		1.069	
Teacher insensitivity - 3 or more (none)	1.319		1.871	***	1.381	
Teacher insensitivity - 1 or 2 (none)	1.232		1.414	*	1.255	
Transfer Support - No (yes)	0.875		0.794		0.901	
Discipline - Few used (many equally)	0.935		0.661		0.735	
Disc. - Susp., Det. off/onsite (many equally)	0.827		0.882		0.886	
Trouble - Acting up (low)	0.866		0.946		1.334	*
Trouble - High Conflict (low)	0.983		0.799		1.167	
Off campus lunch not allowed (allowed)	0.945		1.171		1.573	**
Security - high, cameras & staff (low)	1.059		1.687	****	1.51	**
Parents Supportive (not)	0.705		0.658	*	0.971	
Parents 50/50 support (not)	0.978		1.152		0.855	
Min. rpt UA - missing all day (late.class)	0.835		0.868		0.927	
Min. rpt UA - missing partial day (late.class)	0.967		0.957		1.019	
Policies around UA - Fewer penalties (more)	0.82		0.616	****	0.958	
Parent Notif. of UA - less personal (more)	1.525	**	1.474	**	1.256	
Infrm Stud. Re Becca Other Ways (not done)	0.838		0.962		0.783	
Infrm Stud. re Becca Many Ways (not done)	1.012		1.472		1.200	
AntiTruancy Efforts - none (present)	0.915		1.054		0.911	
RUCA - Other Urban (Urban Core)	1.056		0.966		1.064	
RUCA - Rural (Urban Core)	0.989		0.997		1.243	
% Black (white)	1.005		1.024		0.993	
% Hispanic (white)	1.00		0.999		0.98	****
% Other Race/Ethn. (white)	1.012		1.013		0.989	
% Free Reduced Meals	1.008		1.011	**	1.026	****
Spending Per Pupil (in 1000s)	0.951		0.947		1.069	
Weapons Incidents (per 100s)	1.293		1.242		2.037	

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 18: Survey CNF Model Results

CNF2	Classes	Reasons	OSPI
N	339	319	317
Missing	15	35	37
(ommitted categories in parentheses)	exp(B) P	exp(B) P	exp(B) P
Intercept	0.005****	0.006****	0.009****
Alternative School (elementary)	15.623****	6.566****	5.696****
Regular Middle-High (elementary)	2.509**	1.084	1.345
Min. rpt UA - missing all day (late.class)	0.724	0.715	0.682
Min. rpt UA - missing partial day (late.class)	0.929	0.956	0.996
Policies around UA - Fewer penalties (more)	0.669*	0.838	0.948
Parent Notif. of UA - less personal (more)	1.714*	1.780**	1.499
Infrm Stud. Re Becca Other Ways (not done)	1.526	1.065	0.915
Infrm Stud. re Becca Many Ways (not done)	2.888*	1.742	1.352
No TP Carried over (yes)		0.887	0.915
Attend. Imprv. NA (not imp.)		4.565*	4.155*
Attend. Imprv. Import. (not imp)		1.380	1.207
Age Out NA (not imp.)		0.493*	0.449*
Age Out Import. (not imp)		1.937*	1.596
Grade Imprv. NA (not imp.)		0.949	0.758
Grade Imprv. Import. (not imp)		1.211	1.040
Stud HTL NA (not imp.)		1.098	1.301
Stud HTL Import. (not imp)		0.918	0.959
Prnt HTL NA (not imp.)		0.531	0.588
Prnt HTL Import. (not imp)		1.758	1.658
Illness NA (not imp.)		0.196**	0.196**
Illness Import. (not imp).		0.798	0.785
Transfer NA (not imp.)		0.703	0.535
Transfer Import. (not imp)		1.212	1.190
Cost NA (not imp.)		1.364	1.318
Cost Import. (not imp.)		0.427*	0.601
RUCA - Other Urban (Urban Core)			1.259
RUCA - Rural (Urban Core)			0.886
% Black (white)			1.017
% Hispanic (white)			1.018**
% Other Race/Ethn. (white)			1.017
% Free Reduced Meals			0.993
Spending Per Pupil (in 1000s)			0.972
Inf_Intercept	2.550**	95.000*	2.290*
Inf_SUA	0.967**	0.030	0.765*
_Alpha	4.793****	4.945****	3.114****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Effects that were significant and important only with the added OSPI information were late start (1.4 times the odds for early start vs. later) and parent notification, where less personal notification was associated with 1.5 the odds as more personal notification.

Finally, the percent of students with free or reduced meals was significant in the OSPI-added model, but the odds were only minimally increased (1.01%)

For the zero model component, each increase in SUA decreased the odds of a school being a "certain zero" by 0.40.

Truancy Petitions

The number of truancy petitions filed by school was significant and important in both models for school type, needs, drug and alcohol counselors and security. Alternative schools were 11.2 (classes) and 10.9 (OSPI added) times more likely file than elementary schools. Regular middle and high schools were 3.5 and 2.2 times more likely to file. High needs schools had 1.4 times the odds of filing than low needs schools. Schools with drug and alcohol counselors present 2-5 times a week were 1.5 times more likely to file petitions than those with counselors absent or present less often. Using higher security measures of cameras and security staff coincides with 1.6 (classes) to 1.5 (OSPI added) greater odds of filing than low security measures.

Two variables were significant and important in the Classes model. Schools with fewer sports and more non-sports activities that were less affordable had 1.8 times the odds of filing truancy petitions. Schools that reported 3 or more insensitive teachers had 1.7 the odds, and schools reporting 1-2 had 1.4 the odds as schools with none.

Two effects were not present in the Classes model that became significant and important once the OSPI data was included. School where trouble is mostly in the form of acting up had 1.3 the odds of filing compared to schools with low. Schools that do not allow off-campus lunch had 1.6 times the odds of filing. Demographic measures that were significant but not important were the percent of Hispanic students, and percent students with free or reduced meals.

Chronic Not Filed

For testing the difference between students with 10 or more absences who were eligible for filing and the number of petitions filed, three models were used. The first contained pertinent variables and latent classes, then the potential reasons for not filing were added. Lastly, the averaged OSPI data was included.

Alternative schools were significant and important in all three models. They showed anywhere from 15.6 (classes) to 5.7 (OSPI added) times the odds of having a higher difference between eligible students and filings than regular schools.

Three variables were significant and important in the Classes model only, their effects vanishing in the more extended models. Regular middle-high schools had 2.5 the odds of difference than elementary schools. Less punitive policies around unexcused absences reduced the different by a factor 0.7. Schools that informed students "many ways" had 2.9 the odds as schools that did not inform students.

Schools that did parent notification through less personal means had 1.7 (classes)-1.8 (reasons) times the likelihood of a difference than schools that used more personal methods in the Classes and Reasons models, although the effect was not present in the full model.

There are a number of reasons for not filing a truancy petition on an eligible student. The only reason that stood out for being marked "important" by schools was aging out, with 1.9 times the odds of a gap between eligible students and filings in the Reasons model. This effect was not present in the OSPI-added model, however. Schools that indicated cost was an important factor had 0.4 times the odds of a difference between students and filings in the reasons model only. Otherwise, reasons for not filing were significant and important in both the reasons and OSPI-added models by being not applicable. Schools that said improved attendance was not applicable had 4.6 (reasons) and 4.2 (OSPI-added) times the odds of there being a gap. Schools where aging out of the system was not applicable had 0.5 (reasons) and 0.4 (OSPI-added) the odds. Where illness was not applicable, those schools had 0.2 times the odds in both models.

The only demographic variable that was significant, although not important, was percent Hispanic.

Survey Summary

Variables that consistently increased the odds for the independent variables were alternative and regular middle-high schools. The odds for both types of unexcused absences were increased when schools used less personal means of notifying parents about the absences. Parent support lessened the odds of having basic and chronic unexcused absences, and lack of homework help increased the odds for a school having students who skip. There were higher odds of having chronic absentees in schools with high security, and lower odds where policies were less punitive. Schools with fewer sports and/or less affordable activities were more likely to file truancy petitions, as were schools where student misbehavior came in the form of acting up. Schools with higher percentages of Hispanic and free or reduced meal students also had higher odds of filing. Schools had higher odds of having a difference between chronic absentees and petitions filed when aging out was an important reason for not filing, or when improved attendance was considered not applicable. Schools have fewer odds of a gap when they did not consider cost an important reason not to file, or said that age or illness were not a consideration.

The survey results indicate that schools engage students through relationships that are not only with peers, but also with the adults in the school. Less punitive policies may mean that students are not viewed in the “as-a-risk” category, to be gotten rid of, but seen as people who could be re-engaged. Homework help, adequate sports and activities, and personal attention to youth and parents are all structures that are part of how school environment is designed. If the environment does not work well for a significant proportion of youth, it is worth asking how adults are implicated in school disengagement and truancy or attachment and success.

As with the OSPI data, the following tables (Tables 19-22) show counts and rates for the significant and important variables from the models.

Table 19: Survey, Numbers And Rates Of Students With Unexcused Absences

	Number of students with unexcused absences				Rates (% of enrollment)			
	All	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**	**All**	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**
School Condition								
High needs	13047	182	1053	11812	38.36	38.28	11.92	47.82
Low needs	40626	2196	7549	30881	28.85	64.91	13.27	38.34
Homework help								
No	2720	50	1284	1386	22.14	78.74	14.74	39.49
Yes	50953	2328	7318	41307	31.35	61.34	12.84	40.60
Drug & Alcohol Counselors								
2-5x week	27032	1212	205	25615	47.36	73.06	18.06	47.19
1-4x month	10136	574	418	9144	32.42	58.66	14.47	33.38
none	16505	592	7979	7934	19.09	48.47	12.93	33.66
Teacher Insensitivity								
none	8913	1084	2936	4893	20.57	71.89	11.98	28.25
1 to 2	27569	1098	3891	22580	31.08	51.77	12.54	40.65
3 or more	17191	196	1775	15220	40.17	85.37	17.45	46.99
Parents								
Supportive	38207	762	7099	30346	27.25	39.03	12.26	37.76
50/50	8664	745	716	7203	43.49	82.27	18.48	47.57
Not supportive	6802	871	787	5144	46.37	87.03	20.10	52.75
Notify Parent of Absences								
Less personal means	39150	1252	1629	36269	41.64	60.27	16.47	44.20
More Personal means	14523	1126	6973	6424	17.97	63.21	12.49	27.70

Table 20: Survey, Numbers And Rates Of Students With Ten+ Unexcused Absences

	Number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences				Rates (% of enrollment)			
	All	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**	**All**	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**
School Condition								
High needs	2059	64	71	1924	6.05	13.46	0.80	7.79
Low needs	5702	712	357	4633	4.06	21.05	0.63	5.75
Start time								
Earlier	7077	692	76	6309	6.33	27.81	0.53	6.65
Later	684	84	352	248	1.09	6.13	0.69	2.40
Drug & Alcohol Counselors								
2-5x week	4749	409	3	4337	8.32	24.66	0.26	7.99
1-4x month	1362	155	14	1193	4.36	15.84	0.48	4.35
none	1650	212	411	1027	1.92	17.36	0.67	4.36
Teacher Insensitivity								
3 or more	2911	69	106	2736	6.80	30.05	1.04	8.45
1 to 2	3739	342	186	3211	4.22	16.12	0.60	5.78
none	1111	365	136	610	2.59	24.21	0.57	3.52
Transfer Support								
No	437	1	58	378	1.54	1.54	0.32	3.79
Yes	7324	775	370	6179	5.02	20.43	0.79	6.49
Security								
High	6367	499	126	5742	7.10	29.98	1.18	7.43
Low	1394	277	302	815	1.65	12.62	0.55	2.92
Parents								
Supportive	4888	191	364	4333	3.50	9.78	0.63	5.39
50/50	1688	227	42	1419	8.47	25.07	1.08	9.37
Not supportive	1185	358	22	805	8.08	35.77	0.56	8.26
UA Policies								
Fewer Penalties	4206	508	339	3359	3.46	21.60	0.57	5.62
More Penalties	3555	268	89	3198	6.72	17.79	1.50	7.03
Notify Parent of Absences								
Less personal means	6249	375	102	5772	6.65	18.05	1.03	7.03
More Personal means	1512	401	326	785	1.88	22.51	0.59	3.38

Table 21: Survey, Numbers And Rates Of Truancy Petitions

	Number of students with truancy petitions				Rates (% of enrollment)			
	All	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**	**All**	**Alt**	**R Elem**	**R MidHigh**
School Condition								
High needs	724	13	33	678	2.44	5.91	0.39	3.25
Low needs	2039	210	172	1657	1.59	8.45	0.31	2.39
Activities								
Less affordable/other	255	84	119	52	0.63	8.54	0.37	0.76
Affordable/other	190	104	57	29	0.93	11.06	0.31	2.70
Sports, aid available	2318	35	29	2254	2.39	4.48	0.21	2.74
Drug & Alcohol Counselors								
2-5x week	1716	98	1	1617	3.40	7.15	0.09	3.37
1-4x month	491	74	7	410	1.82	11.13	0.33	1.69
none	556	51	197	308	0.70	7.62	0.32	1.72
Teacher Insensitivity								
3 or more	786	10	61	715	2.27	4.36	0.61	2.94
1 to 2	1463	97	96	1270	1.76	6.89	0.31	2.49
none	514	116	48	350	1.29	10.86	0.20	2.37
Trouble								
Acting up	1361	115	81	1165	2.08	10.63	0.37	2.74
High Conflict	684	27	27	630	2.04	10.30	0.29	2.62
Low	718	81	97	540	1.22	5.95	0.29	2.29
Lunch								
Off campus allowed	631	104	2	525	3.64	9.46	0.11	3.66
No off campus	2132	119	203	1810	1.52	7.41	0.32	2.39
Security								
High	2124	157	44	1923	2.74	12.93	0.40	2.94
Low	639	66	161	412	0.80	4.43	0.30	1.66

Table 22: Survey, Numbers And Rates Of Chronic Truants Not Filed On

	Number of chronically truant students not filed on				Rates (% of enrollment)			
	All	Alt	R Elem	R MidHigh	All	Alt	R Elem	R MidHigh
UA Policies								
Fewer Penalties	2288	331	210	1747	1.90	14.71	0.35	3.06
More Penalties	2048	191	39	1818	4.15	12.68	0.66	4.34
Notify Parent of Absences								
Less personal means	3514	232	68	3214	3.91	11.91	0.63	4.17
More Personal means	822	290	181	351	1.03	16.04	0.32	1.61
Inform. Students of Becca								
Other Ways	649	84	87	478	1.24	11.87	0.32	1.95
Many Ways	3644	438	137	3069	3.55	14.68	0.49	4.27
Not Provided	43	0	25	18	0.30	0.00	0.21	0.70
Reasons for not filing								
Attendance Improved								
NA	103	2	39	62	0.66	0.30	0.41	1.15
Important	3411	459	199	2753	2.68	19.39	0.40	3.65
Not important	822	61	11	750	3.06	8.41	0.14	4.10
Age Out								
NA	264	2	174	88	0.40	0.22	0.38	0.47
Important	3630	520	45	3065	4.66	19.15	0.41	4.77
Not importan	442	0	30	412	1.71	0.00	0.31	2.58
Illness								
NA	80	2	12	66	0.67	0.30	0.18	1.37
Important	3193	495	201	2497	2.52	20.05	0.39	3.46
Not importan	1063	25	36	1002	3.45	4.01	0.44	4.54
Cost								
NA	1790	178	127	1485	2.58	9.76	0.45	3.75
Important	441	147	5	289	2.84	26.91	0.15	2.48
Not important	2105	197	117	1791	2.49	14.21	0.33	3.75

Adult Roles And Responsibilities

Community

A theme of the interviews with community and school personnel was the need for a circle of concern for chronically absent students. The Becca laws involve the parent, the court, the school and potentially the community. Some counties and/or districts provide services for youth and family as a key component of anti–truancy efforts. Where present, services include physical and practical help such as alarm clocks, putting a family in touch with aid for heat or water if necessary, providing rides to school, and introducing youth to

community resources matching their interests. Counseling, such as Functional Family Therapy or substance abuse assessment and treatment may be required. These services, even if available, do not engage all those eligible. Families that facilitate their child's absence often want nothing to do with counseling or treatment. This leaves court alone, with its stipulated agreements and threats of juvenile detention, as the last resort.

School

The mother of the student with over 90 absences said she "really, really, really wanted to bash the school". Some felt that schools punish parents, as if they were giving permission for their child's unexcused absences. Especially for students with a history of being "good kids," schools assume that behavior issues are the parent's fault. Mainly, the comments about the lack of school–parent effort indicated that they felt the schools held them at fault without understanding what efforts the parents were making.

Parents and community workers said that schools needed to step up and do their part, starting with awareness. A truancy worker in one district laughed at another, wealthier, district's insistence that they did not have truancy problems. Those who work more directly with youth chided adults they knew with their "heads in the sand" regarding the availability of drugs, alcohol and guns: "do you just spend your lives off in your own little worlds?" Parents wondered that schools allowed or ignored drug sales in front of the school and drug use between the portables.

Schools could help youth make transitions more easily, since grade structures are under district control. Switching from elementary to middle school meant multiple classroom changes, increased independence, more teachers to keep track of and was a "shock" for some. A number of children began to disengage from education in middle school. Middle schools did not keep as close an eye on youth as elementary schools did, contributing to students taking advantage of increased independence. Parents and social worker felt that starting middle school at sixth grade meant students missed the year of "being the big dog" in elementary school. Changing from middle to high school also proved tricky for some children because of placement issues. When youth did not get

into the school of their choice, they scrambled to find somewhere to send them. Problems in middle school were carried forward. When principals told mothers their children were not wanted at a particular school, placement became a matter of what was possible rather than what was suitable. Alternative schools were used in lieu of placement in regular schools, with some being good fits and others less so.

Beyond particular placements, general criticisms of regular public schools included their size (at the middle and high school level), and that while American schools are good at “putting round pegs in round holes,” they are not good at anything that stretches that model. The practice of social promotion in elementary and middle school leaves many students ill–prepared when they reach high school. Then, the school teaches those that fit, and “washes their hands” of the rest, avoiding responsibility for educating “square pegs.” Regarding truancy, one worker said that letters to the family to request a truancy hearing were merely legal cover, as schools know 90% of the parents will not answer and then the school can expel the child for not responding. They spoke of a not–my–problem attitude on the part of some districts. In its most benign form, schools do what they can do, and if it does not work the student becomes someone else’s problem. At its most virulent, problem students are viewed as “bringing cancer” to a school. A history of suspension makes it difficult to find a placement, and this attitude spreads up to the district level. Regular schools find it easier to reroute youth than deal with them, shunting them into alternative or G.E.D. programs.

Community workers criticized schools for focusing on standardized testing at the expense of classes that could engage students who are not academically oriented, such as music, writing, art or craft skills. One felt that a large number of students do not like school, and so public school will not work for them. Those who do not like school form a community that pulls students who are undecided away from school.

Everyone had opinions on disciplinary policies, which are under district and school control. Although parents all understood and supported the need to have reasonable behavior in the classroom, they felt that schools often “shoot themselves in the foot” in how they handle students. Community workers also

felt that regular school's tendency to suspend students for insubordination or disruption was a big overreaction. Challenging and "attitude" were seen as part of teen behavior, especially in middle school, and adult failure to handle it appropriately was a major complaint. Aside from the disruption that suspension causes in parent lives, many felt that it empowered the very behavior it was meant to address. One youth's rude comment to a teacher netted a 3-day suspension, teaching him how much power he had over adults. The parent did not condone rudeness but observed that "kids say stuff, day in day out" and it should not be rewarded with going home. One counselor informed a boy that "middle school did not really count" when he was sent to her for some minor infraction, and that from that day on the mother had problems getting him to behave and finish his homework.

School personnel and others who work with parents of absent youth complained about the difficulties of reaching parents. Yet parents had their own complaints about school communications with them, starting with lack of outreach. While various parent–school teams were supposed to exist in schools (at least within the districts of the parents interviewed), very few, if any, actually had parent members. Title I schools enforce parent–school contracts that spell out the responsibilities of the student, school and parents, but that is not a normal part of regular schools.

One parent saw a dramatic difference between the alternative and regular schools her son had attended. At the regular schools, she was not notified of problems until they occurred several times, while the alternative school called the same day. Parents generally liked the small size and ability to maintain relationships with staff at most of the alternative schools. The ability to individualize the curriculum and work through requirements, vocational courses, one–on–one teacher time, and safety were reasons parents and community workers gave for success of some youth in alternative schools.

But just as no two regular schools are identical, neither are alternative schools. Those working in education distinguished between alternative schools that offer popular programs, where students go voluntarily, and the alternative schools that are either places for behavior modification or try to serve populations that do not fit well in the regular school model. Others said that

most alternative school students had some kind of problem or they would not be there. These students were more prone to truancy and behavioral challenges than regular school students. Many spoke of the lower expectations in non–voluntary alternative schools, where little, if any homework is ever assigned (or completed), and the challenges of trying to teach unpredictable and sporadic students.

Despite these specific critiques of schools and schooling, parents were generally sympathetic to teachers. As one mother said, “they tried the only things that they know how to do.” Parents recognized the teachers who tried hard to reach their child, who gave extra effort to engage the student or get them to school. One said that blaming schools was unfair, that we get nowhere with a “blame game.” Parents made apologies for schools. They felt that schools had too much to do, there were limits on what could be expected from them and that they operated with a limited viewpoint.

Parents

Irresponsible parents

Parent irresponsibility surfaced in a number of interviews. A teacher, social workers, and attendance facilitator thought parents who did not know the signs of drug abuse, or believed that suburbia was safe from weapons were willfully naïve, and “don't get what's going on with their own kids.” Parents often did not know about school resources, or that a school maintained an online attendance system.

Family challenges are often associated with poverty, but workers said that parenting issues are the same in wealthy families and poor ones. They observed that in the transition from cute, attractive child to semi–independent teenager some parents were afraid to continue parenting. One felt that teenagers need their parents more than when they were children, albeit not in the same fashion. They chided adults — parents and school personnel alike — for not encouraging youth, for making it easy for them to misbehave and not holding youth accountable for their actions.

More serious critiques of parent irresponsibility targeted adults who facilitate their children's drug and alcohol use, allowing youth to occupy a house during school hours. Many subjects, parents included, said that parents lack control and do not know how to set boundaries or enforce consequences. Some blamed divorced parents' failure to work as a team. They felt that socialization that used to occur in the family, with the old accountability of two parents, especially a father, is missing. Social workers in a focused anti–truancy effort said that approximately 10–15% of parents resist programs or services that would assist getting their child to attend school and programs lack staff and time to pursue them. These are the parents who go missing, the ones who fail to attend teacher–parent conferences or meetings to draft truancy agreements. These parents do not return phone calls, read letters or notify the school when changing phone numbers and they move without leaving a forwarding address.

While these observations put blame on parents, one social worker was not unsympathetic to their situation. Where, she asked, was the benefit for them? Taking time off work for meetings during school hours means losing pay. Frequent phone calls from school can threaten job security. Several people within the system felt that parents do not realize the extent of their power because most are not aware that they can file a Truancy Petition themselves. Going through the legal system takes work, however, and some parents are not willing to put in the effort of going back to court 4 or 5 times in a couple of months. Or, parents want the social workers do the work of the At–Risk Petition for them, which is not legally possible.

One of the attractions of the parent group was that it gave parents peer support through the tedious legal channels, and helped them delineate the possibilities and limits of their actions and reactions to their children. This knowledge empowered parents who felt that situations were beyond their control. Those handling Becca within the school system said that parents are often surprised at the school's cooperation in getting their kid back to school, and that parents respond when they know where to go and what to do. Parents often felt overwhelmed, and failed by the legal system. Workers reported that a first step in getting parent cooperation is "getting through the verbal lashing" while remaining calm and acknowledging their frustrations.

Parents in the study spoke of "other" parents with characteristics that matched the irresponsible parents mentioned by school and service workers. Those “other” parents are not the parents interviewed, but more likely the ones who broke interview dates or failed to return phone calls. Parents in the study are biased towards caring and responsibility and experienced their own forms of difficulties dealing with their children’s truancy and associated behaviors.

Study parents

These parents tried to be responsible and hold their children accountable. One described making morning enjoyable, with little rituals to get her children up and off to school (while her boys had other school difficulties, they were not skipping). She adamantly supported their education, stressing the importance of school and telling them they could take pride in following the rules, that school is like work. The mother whose son had Crohn’s disease supplemented his lunches and “worked on him” to pull him away from drugs, drinking and girls. One clearly saw the limitations of her daughter's ability to make good decisions and obtained a restraining order on a boy who had raped and was stalking her. Another made sure her daughter had good care during the mother’s illness, finding a camp for the daughter to attend while she was in surgery, and, at the daughter's request, helping her get into a private school on two weeks' notice. A mother found a Job Corps program that helped one young man to finish adolescence prepared for the future.

Many parents advocated for their children, with mixed success. Mothers advocated when their children’s absences were caused by illness, trying to find ways for them to keep earning their credits. One tried to work with the school counselor, but said that the counselor had no ideas. Those who sought mental health services found them hard to access, even with health coverage, and said that the services that were available lacked good advice.

They made efforts to support their kids at school, even if some parents were not “PTA moms.” Most parents had stated expectations for their children’s success at school and graduation. They made sure their kids got to school on time, called schools, went to conferences, gave youth home consequences for skipping, checked websites and monitored homework. The parent of a girl in a

new alternative program was required to teach there part-time. Another talked to her son about the education necessary for his career aspirations, trying to induce reality into his fantasy of success without a diploma. One mother moved to a better school district, while two made sure their sons attended schools they worked at (successful for that year, in one case, not in the other). Some volunteered or invested in sports. Others were not so involved either because of work schedules or lack of interest in that particular venue for school interaction. Several spoke of the increased difficulty of staying involved with the school once their kids entered middle and high school, and they felt the burden was on them to make the effort.

Many reached a point of not doing anything, but getting to that point was not quick. Parents who were recruited through the support group said joining was a step in the journey to sorting who was responsible for what, towards letting go. Two mothers contemplated filing an ARY petition, but feared it would alienate them even further from their children as it meant "profound disrespect." Other parents said they felt that the petition either would work or not based on the child's personality, with the internally–driven youth least likely to respond.

Other, later efforts reflected their realistic assessment of the situation for those whose children were in their late teens. Youth quit pretending to go to school and parents quit pretending to make them go, with great relief for both parties. One mother said that monetary support would end if the daughter left school, so the daughter found work. Another let her daughter withdraw after three "miserable" years, and provided only the basics. Once children began working, they were often great employees, and once the connection between education and career was made very clear through the experience of working, they became interested in getting a G.E.D. or going to Community College.

Parents blamed themselves for general ignorance of the challenges their children faced, saying that they "could not help with what they did not know." Specific connections between student circumstances and school behavior were often made in hindsight. One realized later that her daughter's difficulties began when the mother faced serious surgery. Another wondered whether her son's unwilling to leave home was related to her disability and her own difficulty in leaving the house. Yet the kind of circumstances that parents and truancy

workers described as interfering with attendance were voiced as barriers to attendance, not excuses for skipping school. Ultimately, youth themselves had to be held accountable.

Youth

Community subjects noted that when teachers seem to be disenfranchising students, what this often means is that teachers are holding students accountable for their behavior. Success occurs through incorporating youth in discussions, putting them in charge of their own future while simultaneously promoting them as *having* a future. Frequent positive reinforcement was the key, according to a student advocate. Continually placing the student as the "driver of the bus" might not have immediate benefits, but was essential to eventual success. An advocate said "they turn the corner when they are ready", but she also said that continual positive pressure to make that turn is a necessary ingredient to getting youth educated. Accountability is generally agreed upon to grow with age. Elementary truancy, for instance, is viewed as the parents' responsibility, while older students are dealt with directly.

Relationships Drive Student Success

Woven in the interviews is the sense that all is personal. One attendance facilitator said it was all about "relationships, relationships, relationships!" and if she had extra help she would send them out in the field to work on: "relationships!" Those who work closely with students felt that finding motivation is a human condition, and that students may enjoy sports, activities or classes but they come to school for their friends. Teachers, administrators and parents wish for scholars, but relationships trump academics.

Parents said that they could build relationships with teachers in elementary school that were difficult or impossible at the middle and high school levels. On mother said that she knew her daughter's grades were falling, but the middle school teachers had no idea "how high the girl could go" and did not take her concerns seriously. Another felt that students without a strong support system would have a hard time in public schools, and schools assume that the connection between action and consequence is taught at home. Contradictory

statements about the role of the personal at school include remarks that the personal belongs outside school, that schools can not get away from handling the personal feelings of their students, and that schools are not interested in home dynamics or what goes on with students outside the classroom.

Youth also wanted attention and approval from adults. Attendance workers said that even one trusted relationship with an adult in a school makes a difference in a student's attendance, whether with teacher, counselor, janitor or lunch lady. Others saw that positive efforts with youth worked much better than punitive measures. They spoke of making an invitation to the students they worked with, constantly affirming, encouraging and pushing them in the right direction. Even when these methods appear not to work in the moment, students come back later when they are ready to get their education because they knew the door is open. While "some reps push paper," others in the system felt that most were dedicated, and talked about the efforts to get the community to "wrap arms around their kids."

Relationships were important at the adult level, too. Successful anti–truancy efforts required collaboration between professionals and links between schools, services and the community. Those working to get students back in school talked about the trust needed between schools and attendance facilitators, and the need to develop relationships with all those involved, not just the student or the family. It was not "we the professionals" telling people what to do, but that all with an interest in any particular case could sit and talk, brainstorm and come up with solutions. One attendance worker created a resource book that she copies and sends to all court staff so that everyone is aware of all the options available for aiding families and youth.

Other comments mentioned intergenerational relations in general ways that tie back to the theme of accountability. One teacher saw youth as willful, ignorant and privileged (comparing their situations to childhoods in third–world slums). Some mentioned that lowered expectations for youth are indulgent, that society is too easy on them. One said that kids need to be parented, but school cannot do that parenting. This person also told of a class held in the first year of middle school by a policy maker in her county that "drilled" the students on actions and consequence. The students hated the class and the teacher until they

reached high school, when they returned to thank him for the pre–education and decision making skills the class provided. Although this person did not see school as an appropriate venue, she acknowledged that schools have to "pick up the slack" on values education, since it was not occurring at home. Another felt that young people wanted instant gratification, that life was "pause/reboot" for them, but saw this an adult failing. She felt that "we have soft–soaped" a generation, and "fed youth a bill of goods" regarding the true effort life takes. With the changing nature of work, and an economic system where a high school diploma is not enough, some youth still think that unskilled labor jobs are the answer. She called this the "Boeing attitude" and described efforts to overcome youth ignorance about the disappearance of jobs in the steel, textile, coal and other labor–intensive industries. Many youth do not identify as potential college material in the traditional sense, and to reach those students she redefined "college" as any education beyond high school to give them incentive to finish their credits. She stressed that it takes someone who knows them to push young people to find their interests and pursue them.

These criticisms of the Becca process and schools had their counterpoint in the many suggestions subjects had for improving the educational experience for youth.

Proposed Solutions

This was one of the least successful areas for discussion in the student interviews. One student indicated he'd had enough of the interview by segueing into jokes and swearing, and many said no, they had no ideas. A few said that more respect would make school better by not "treating us like little kids." One wanted teachers who were not "stuck in old mind–states." Two students wanted proper enforcement of school rules. One wanted to see increased drug searches to weed out students who were high in class. The other wanted the school to follow up when students reported bullying.

Adult subjects agreed that fighting truancy was a team effort, involving parents, schools, youth and the community. Some were not optimistic, feeling that there is no solution, but many offered opinions about what could help.

Reduce Suspension

One of the biggest critiques of school policy regarding truancy was the use of suspension. Everyone noted the irony of barring students who already had attendance barriers from school. Many expressed a desire for in–school consequences to put responsibility back on the child and hold them accountable within the school location. Instead of suspension, they wanted positive discipline policies and brainstorming solutions to problem behavior. One parent summarized the position: "it happened at school, settle it at school." Social workers wanted in–school detention as a way to address problem behavior, doing away with suspensions altogether. Before and after school classes and detention rooms or homework clubs would keep youth on campus and not have them miss out on education. Several felt that physical consequences, such as the old–fashioned punishment of writing on the board, or physical motion would keep consequences short and to the point. One school used push–ups (for boys), who respected that outcome.

Play Closer Attention to Students At School

Those who have worked closely with youth talked about the need for more mental health and drug/alcohol counselors available in every school from fifth grade through high school. Education around drugs, alcohol, guns, and violence should start in the middle grades. Parents felt teachers could be more involved. Since parents are expected to contribute to their child's education after working all day, then teachers should be more available for discussion or home visits. Others wanted more proactive handling of students who do not fit well in traditional schools. One facilitator said that if she were "queen," each secondary school would have two alternative schools within it, one for the students who are "round pegs in square holes" and another for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges. She said that youth who wind up in court are often repeat offenders who start the school year poorly, improve for a while, then disengage again. Shorter school years, or longer years with shorter breaks, might keep these youth engaged.

Parents and facilitators want schools to consider learning style, and try to identify and focus on student strengths, and know their students. More radical proposals included having evaluations done on all middle school students at entry, creating an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student, to be filed and ignored until the first sign of trouble.[2] One said bluntly that putting that age group in large school was an "absolute mistake," that middle school was worse than elementary school and a "losing proposition." Another parent said that maybe we should do away with middle school altogether and substitute service learning instead.

School personnel felt that teachers are there to teach, and that teachers are too variable in their ability to track attendance. Volunteers or staff devoted to following up with missing students and their parents would leave teachers free to do their real work. Geographical solutions included finding incentives to have teachers live in the school's neighborhood, so they would know the students outside of school, and to have teachers, not students, be the ones to transition classrooms.

Teachers and facilitators wanted schools to have some authority to enforce interventions and sanctions, perhaps using some kind of in–school simulated court. One teacher mentioned how mock courts at one school engaged students by having a discussion among peers rather than being lectured to by adults. They talked about wanting to handle more within the school (in concert with parents' desires), of having faster and on–site consequences rather than dragging things out through the courts.

Improve Timing

Those working with students and youth stressed the need for quick and meaningful consequences, since "they are not bothered by things that don't affect them," with "affect" meaning to cause some discomfort or get their attention. The timing of attempts to hold youth accountable was also important. As one attendance facilitator explained, kids say "'What's the most that's going to

[2] Fears of documenting failure may be tempered by the comments of the social workers that often they are the first and only person to actually read a student's cumulative file.

happen? I'm going to back in three months, so there's three months I could've skipped school — not a big deal!' And truly, that's — the kids say that's what their opinion is! The kids will voice it to you!" Attendance improves when students know that the school will quickly follow up any absences and notify parents. Lack of quick follow up in the court system deflates its threat value.

Change the Funding

Socially–minded subjects wanted more funding for engaging families and to create ways to reach individual parents. Community education and dissemination of the law and issues through popular media was another wish–list item. One suggestion was to reroute funding from standardized testing to early intervention. Early intervention was defined as addressing incipient truancy at earlier grade levels and therefore at an earlier adolescent age, or intervening when the students begin to skip school, rather than letting unexcused absences build up.

All of these suggestions depend upon adequate funding, however, which varied in the 1990s but hovers around $1.5 million per year since 2004 (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009b, p. 11). This amount is a retreat from the work and cost of addressing truancy apparent in the early years of implementing Becca, when the budget for enforcing all the law (not just truancy petitions) reached $14 million. Remembering the reduction to $8 million in the next biennium prompted one subject to say that three groups of people wanted youth on the streets: pimps, drug dealers and the state legislature.

Improve Measurement

Several community workers commented on the difficulties of measuring truancy, and the lack of meaningful measures. While parents told individual stories of their children's absences not being reported nor filed on, at a more systemic level this translated to a discrepancy between those eligible for filing and actual filing rates. One reported that between two comparable districts, one files 50 petitions a year, the other 300, and he did not believe the students were all that much worse in the second district. Although there are studies, and programs in place in several counties, knowing what, exactly, works is still not

resolved. Even more important is defining how to measure success. Is it in the number of petitions filed, or in the number of potential filings vs. students reengaged and not needing a filing? Is it in graduation rates? Those with funding knowledge discussed how the lack of appropriate and accurate measurement affects how money is distributed to fight truancy. At the time, the Adequate Yearly Progress requirement of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act meant that without increased attendance, schools could lose their funding. Several subjects suspected that schools underreported absences as a way of keeping attendance numbers up. Meanwhile, the state reimburses for filing Truancy Petitions[3], so these two levels of governmental goals are at odds with each other. Lack of meaningful measures also contribute to the up– vs. down–stream debate around funding. Are monies better spent in prevention and keeping youth out of the courts or should more money go to making the courts more effective and efficient?

These suggestions all have merit, but many would involve a radical rethinking of the education system. The final portion of the study asks instead about changes that could be made within the existing system that would affect absenteeism rates.

Predicting How Changes Could Affect Truancy

Many variables, such as demographics or budgetary items are not easily manipulated or depend on factors outside the school. Therefore, significant and notable variables that schools have some control over were used in the prediction model. First, a district-level model was run that contributed the coefficients. Then, the data was modified and rerun with these coefficients to determine what effect, if any, changes would have on the chronic absentee rate. Detailed results are available in Appendix 4, Tables 24a-b.

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[3] At the time of the interviews, schools were reimbursed around $120 per filing. Subjects said that does not begin to cover the real costs of time, paper, etc. that are part of pursuing a petition. The gap between what is reimbursed and what people feel the actual costs are is probably the source of the belief that Becca is an "unfunded mandate" for schools, although technically it is not, since the legislature marks money for both the court and school portions of Becca.

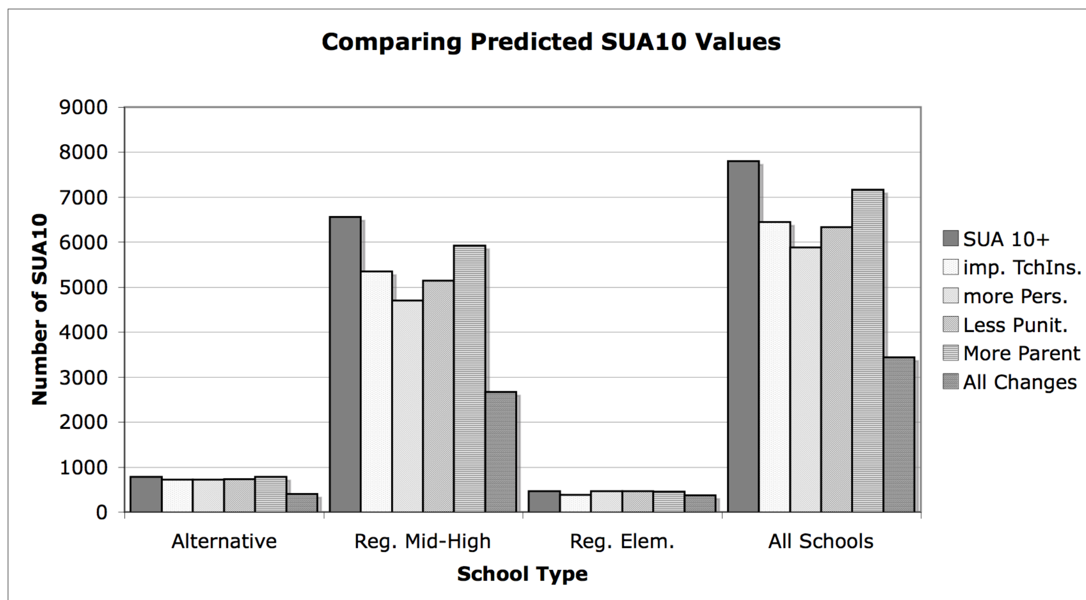
Schools have control over teachers, the policies around unexcused absences and how they follow up on absences. Parent support was included because schools that do outreach to parents and involve them in a partnership are more likely to have higher attendance (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Coleman, 1991; Kearney, 2008; Noguera, 2004). Parent notification of unexcused absences and penalties for absences and tardiness were modified for middle and high schools (leaving elementary schools as a comparison).

The total number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences for all schools in the survey was 7,803. Running the model with data changed to reflect decreasing teacher insensitivity by one category (1–2 adjusted to 0, 3–6 adjusted to 1–2, etc.) yielded 1,356 fewer chronic absentees. With parent support increased by one category resulted in 642 fewer students with 10 or more absences. Changing the unexcused absence policies to be more lenient for middle and high schools showed a decrease in chronic absentees of 1469. By personalizing parental notification in middle and high schools, 1,919 fewer students with multiple absences were predicted as a result of the model. Finally, putting all the changes together, the model predicted 4,367 fewer students with chronic absences, a reduction of 56%, or approximately 12 fewer students per school.

The individual predictions were compared according to school type. The largest effect was for middle and high schools, with the most change for personalizing notifying parents of unexcused absences (-28.4%). Less punitive policies for tardy and unexcused absences showed a reduction of 21.7%, and improved teacher sensitivity reduced chronic absentees by 18.6%. Increase parent support had the least effect on middle and high schools (-9.7%). Change effects on alternative schools were much lower, with most changes reducing chronic absenteeism by 6-7% except for parent support, which had minimal effect (-0.7%). Elementary schools were affected by improved teacher sensitivity (-17.9%) and increased parent support (-2.2%).

Putting all changes into the model, regular middle and high schools had the biggest reduction (-59.4%), alternative school had the next biggest effect (-48.5%) and elementary schools the least, although still notable, reduction (-20.4%).

Graphic representations of these changes are available in Figures 4a-c. (Tables 16a and 16b in Appendix 4 contain the summary and detail figures.) The chart comparing counts shows how middle and high schools hold the bulk of chronic absentees by number, while the per school chart indicates how reductions affect the count per school. The rates chart, however, shows how alternative schools rates are higher than regular rates. All the charts indicate that while individual changes may make a difference, implementing multiple changes yield the biggest reductions in chronic absenteeism.



. Predicted SUA10 Counts

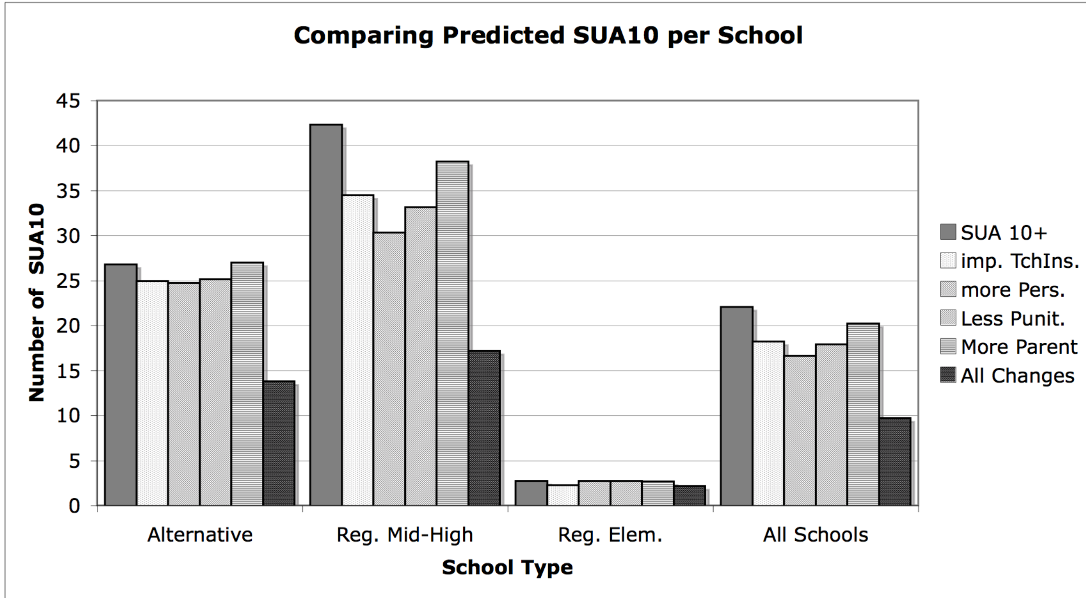


Figure 4b. Predicted SUA10 Per School

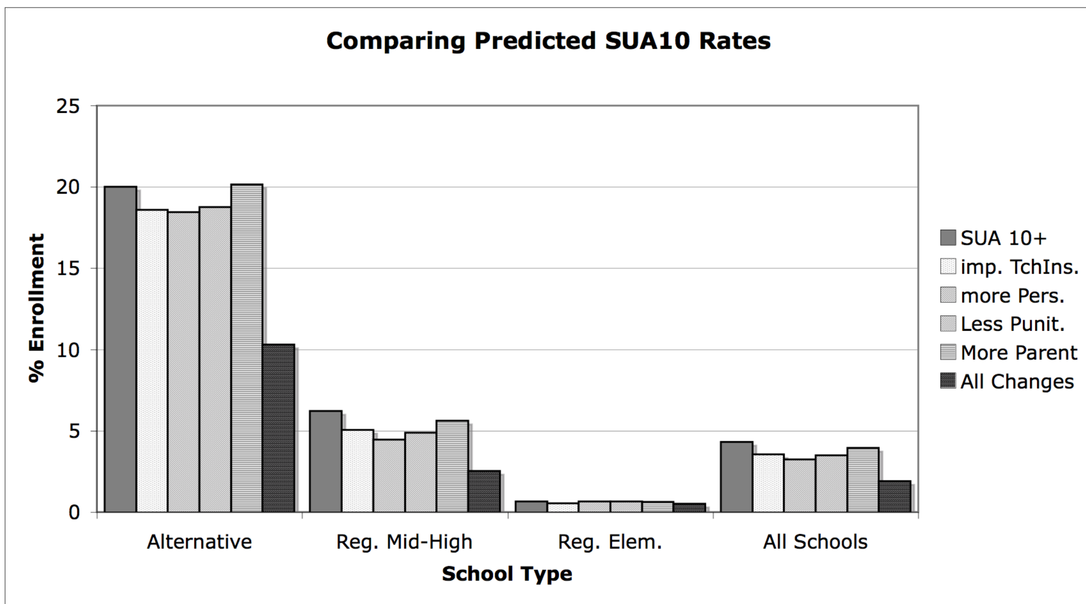


Figure 4c. Predicted SUA10 Rates

This predictive modeling indicated that implementing policies that were less punitive and more inclusive could reduce the number of students with chronic unexcused absences. Increased teacher sensitivity, improved parent support, personal notification of absences and less punitive policies around truancy and tardies appeared to decrease the odds of a school having higher numbers of chronically absent students.

All of the above changes support the idea of youth rights, of treating students "as if" they were people (John, 2003), albeit people within community network of others.

Youth And Rights

All adults talked about the need to treat youth as individuals, to find out what works for any particular student. They said youth are not miniature adults and that expecting adult behavior is unrealistic. Community workers hoped that the creative aspect of applying the Becca law would help shape best practices for dealing with truancy. Social workers spoke of "meeting kids where they are at" and setting realistic goals respecting their rights to self–determination. For instance, truancy agreements that contain a pledge to "never skip school again" were derided as unworkable and a set–up for failure. Parents often go into court with a huge list of behaviors they want their child to conform to, not realizing how difficult it will be for the youth to comply and for the parent to monitor and report. Instead, they described the need to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions, bending rules if necessary.

While parents and society fear the *becoming* side of youth decisions, there was respect for the *being* of youth, at least in terms of patience. One mother said, "It really is their life…they have to decide they need an education." Those who write attendance agreements with students talked about the need to brainstorm and put them in charge as much as possible. One advocate said that she explicitly tells students that the services, team and assistance are there for them and they have to decide what fits best. In education, subjects expressed the need to take different learning styles into consideration, to find goals that suited each child, and that even "cookie–cutter kids" were not identical in their needs or path.

Youth independence in thoughts, feelings and actions were apparent in the parent interviews. Mothers said that they envisioned independence as children independently deciding to "do the right thing," but youth vision was different. Children who were already fairly independent "pounced" on middle school's requirement for increased independence and tested rules by breaking them. Some felt they allowed too much independence at home, leading their children to have expectations of being listened to, acting on their own and in

their own fashion. Others felt that in some areas schools expect students to act more mature than they actually are, especially when letting them go off–campus for lunch, where it was too easy to keep going once off school property, or failing to supervise lunches.

Parents were clear about their children's strengths. They described youth who were intelligent, charismatic, verbal, outgoing and achievement oriented. They told of their children's interests and accomplishments in chess, sports, mentoring. Some had ideas about what school settings aided their children's success. The right structure, the right teacher, the right level of challenge, and the youth could fulfill their potential, could move into the future.

Most of the students who participated in the study had parents who were unable or unwilling to participate, and most were under eighteen, so their later stories are unknown. One mother said, "If he can stay alive, he will land on his feet," sharing both her fear and hope for him. But parents who contributed to the study often described their children's later adolescence. Generally, as their children grew older and went through some of the consequences of truancy, drugs and involvement with Becca or other sections of the law, they gradually gained responsibility. One was in Running Start and three were in Community College. One young woman's parent helped her accept that although her actions ended her dream of a four–year university, she was still "an okay person," she had learned a lot through her experiences and they believed she was going to make it. Another mother, whose daughter turned 18 and withdrew from school, defended her child's decision to a school counselor, pointing out that school had not worked for this girl, and, that at 18, she was legally within her rights to make her own decisions. While the experiences were challenging for adults and adolescents, the families came to understanding and the youth crafted lives for themselves.

Chapter V - Discussion

Based upon the theme of youth rights, the discussion topics are organized under the four "Ps" of children's rights: participation, provision, protection and power. Measures of school engagement and barriers to attendance are grouped under "Participation Rights." Schools' responsibilities for providing a good environment and adult responsibility towards youth are discussed as "Provision Rights." The Becca law is considered as an aspect of "Protection Rights." Intergenerational relations and the debates around youth autonomy as they relate to school and Becca are arranged as concerns of "Power Rights." These categories often overlap. Depending on the topic, provision rights may oppose or support rights to power, protection rights blur into provision rights, or concerns about participation rights intertwine with questions of power. Generally, however, the topics of the discussion fit broadly under these four themes.

Participation Rights And School Engagement

Youth participation is often defined as youth rights to voice an opinion through councils, protest, or by making contributions to policy matters. Student courts, peer counseling and student newspapers let engaged students participate in the educational structure, albeit one that still has adult veto. However, the ability to exercise those rights rests on a more basic form of participation, being present at school. One fear for chronic truants is that by failing to engage in school they start a path that leads to failing to participate in society.

The increasing focus on truancy indicates a shift in our understanding of schools and education from school as privilege to obligation. The transfer of schooling from a familial task to a social one occurred long ago (Coleman, 1991) but the idea of school as a privilege still resonates in the ways that students are expected to adapt to the institution, regardless of any particular school's adequacy. In addition, the globalization of manufacturing and change to a knowledge- and service-based economy in the last 30 years has disenfranchised manual labor and prized education. This economic shift was accompanied by

philosophies of rational choice that construct citizens as autonomous and self-creating, responsible for their own success or failure. Therefore, school becomes an obligation because failing school is considered failing to become a citizen.

The question of whether school is a privilege or an obligation lies at the heart of the questions about school engagement. If school is a privilege, whether students attend or not is really a matter for families and youth to decide, an "it's your loss if you don't go" philosophy. If school is an obligation, then schools (and other adults) feel justified in using coercive means to keep students in school. But what if school is a right? If youth have a duty to become educated as the means to belong in society, then society has a reciprocal obligation to make it possible for youth to obtain that education. That reciprocal obligation is the right to education.

Incidence of Truancy in Washington State

Counting the number of students who skip classes or days in a particular school is one way of measuring student engagement and whether schools fulfill youth rights to an education. A truancy rate calculated using OSPI enrollment and student count totals (rather than a by-school rate) found that 29.1% of students were truant at some point, which argues with the results from the 1998 case study (Harding & Burley, 1998) that found an average 10% of students skipping school. This study's finding that 4.1% of students had 10 or more unexcused absences is closer to the 2009 study that found chronic truants to be 4.9% of all students (Klima, Tali, et al., 2009b, p. 3). This indicates that occasional truancy is more widespread, yet chronic truancy less so. The correlation coefficient between students with any absences vs. students with chronic absences (0.66) was lower than expected if general truancy leads directly to chronic truancy. Instead, it shows that much absenteeism is experimental and situational, and reflects school efforts to stem chronic truancy by addressing early absences.

While the percent of truant students for alternative and regular schools were similar, at about 30-35% of enrollment, their percentages of chronic truants diverge. Students with chronic absences are around 4% of enrollment for regular and 11% for alternative schools. This reflects the geographic "fix" of transferring

students who do not work well with regular school to alternative settings, thus concentrating in one place those students most likely to skip school.

While many of the OSPI model results agreed with prior research, the research yielded some surprises. Rural schools had much lower odds of all dependent measures. These odds could be tied to smaller school sizes, or less of a "pull" from the surrounding area when compared to urban schools. But schools in Other Urban areas had higher odds of general and chronic truancy, and higher odds of petitions and a gap in filing than Urban Core schools. This finding challenges the attention given to large urban school districts in studies of dropouts and truancy. Urban Core schools made up 64.2% of schools in the study, so that the increased odds for Other Urban are for a lower number of schools (13.3%), but the differences between them warrant further attention.

Both Rumberger (2000) and Noguera (2007) discussed the existence of "the usual" high schools with high dropout rates. This commonality also applies to truancy in Washington schools. Around half of the schools in the study had no or little general truancy. Others had rates over 100% because of high turnover, where every student skipped at least once. Around 17% of the schools had 40-80% of their students skipping school, but their chronic truancy rate was less than 20%. Using ">20%" as a definition for school rates of chronic truancy in the 4 years of the study, then an average of 144 schools per year had rates greater than 20%. This is a much smaller number than the 3,000+ schools in Washington State. By counting students with chronic absences and comparing them to enrollment, rather than comparing absences to school days, districts could focus their anti-truancy efforts in the places where they are most needed.

That 20% cutoff could change, but the principle that measurement determines which schools need to pay attention to truancy remains. The "moral panic" aspect of the truancy literature that makes all students "at-risk" fosters a focus on their behavior regardless of whether their absences are chronic or not. These numbers show that most students are not at-risk, and most schools do not have endemic problems with chronic absenteeism.

Personal limits to attendance

The maxim that truancy is a "canary in the coal mine" for youth came up in a number of interviews, reinforcing McCray's (2006) idea that truancy is a sign of bigger issues in student lives. One view of truants is that they are substantively different from non-truant students, whether by their psychological profiles (Eggers, 1998; Kearney & Albano, 2004), involvement with the legal system (Zhang, D., et al., 2007) or as students with unmet needs (Southwell, 2006). Zhang found that truants involved with the justice system are usually female, and have less probability of committing later felonies. Zhang's numbers disagree with Kearney's statement that gender is not significant, although Kearney was measuring all truants, not the ones involved in the justice system. Freeman (1981) also found status offenses discriminatory against girls and gay youth. Of the 17 students whose experiences are in the study through interviews or parent description, half the boys (5) but only 1 of the girls had not skipped school, which would tend to support Freeman and Zhang's statements.

All youth in the study had some form of life situation that made school a difficult place to remain, whether trying circumstances, psychological problems, illness or identity crises. Although Kearney's (2004) ideas of proximal reinforcements for school refusal, such as avoiding anxiety, getting attention or some form of tangible rewards that occur outside school are useful for understanding the motivation behind truancy, they still say nothing about why those motivations supercede the motivations to stay in school. Southwell (2006, p. 92) pointed out that all efforts to get students back to school ignore the student perspective of being pushed or "cajoled" back to situations they already find unacceptable. Based on the stories from parents and youth in the study, youth faced circumstances that were understandable cause for social anxiety, depression or acting out. The mobility between schools caused by searches for placement and transfers in and out of alternative schools added to social isolation. These situations had immediate and direct impact on student's ability to attend and pay attention in school, yet fall outside what most would consider schools' range of concern. Others' internal motivations had little in common with school needs for obedience and conformity. Parent descriptions of their

children's efforts to avoid school partially overlapped Kearney's continuum model (2008), with those who would not get up, those who avoided particular classes, those who skipped occasionally and those with long-term consecutive absences. Reid's (2008) categorization of truants would seem to be useful, but these students did not sort neatly into his categories of those who do not like school, those with problems and challenges at home, and those with psychological problems. Two had diagnosed psychological problems, and several exhibited behavior that would interfere with conforming to school standards. Believing in magic at 15 in one case, and sexual aggression to younger students in another precluded their ability to attend regular school. For others, the extreme perfectionism that several parents reported tied in to the school anxiety literature, as did their inability to get up in the morning.

Several parents recited a litany of things they tried to get their children ready for school: wheedling, bribing, rewards, cold water, incremental loss of privileges (down to the child sleeping on mattress in a bare room), yanking sheets, yelling and so forth. None of these experiences mattered to the child. When nothing worked, either as stick or carrot, the difficulties of "making" someone who is your size (or bigger) do what you want when they do not want to became apparent. Most of these "not-so-good" youth were part of a family system that contained other children, and parents compared their child's behavior with their other, less challenging children. They felt that the evolution of their child's truancy depended partly on circumstances and partly on the child's unique reaction to those circumstances, that they differed from other youth.

Psychological tests, juvenile justice records and school transcripts can indicate the ways that truants differ from the general student population. Other research stresses parents' role in truancy. Parents fail to support youth education or condone absences (Sheldon, 2009), do not supervise their children, or suffer from mental and emotional problems (Eggers, 1998) that interfere with parenting. Single parents (Eggers, 1998), or generally chaotic family life (McCray, 2006) are associated with truancy. Yet youth interact with other adults for much of the day, if they are in school. Their learning about adult society is not completely controlled by the family environment. Teachers are in the forefront of

other adult relations, but staff and administration theoretically provide opportunities for youth to relate to, confide in, question and test adults. A few students in the study had teachers and other non-family adults trying to reach out to them and help them, many did not. They went through their personal challenges without knowledge or input from school personnel.

Role Of The Personal

Several subjects made comments that indicated their desire to keep influential aspects of students' lives outside the classroom. Yet interviewees gave some grudging acknowledgement that the personal is impossible to avoid. A few felt it was necessary to take aspects of students' lives into consideration within school bounds. Parents recognized that personal travails could affect school participation. One mother believed youth needed help motivating for school just as adults do for work, and other parents let their children stay home on difficult days. The challenges for youth in the study went beyond simple motivation, however. While it seems obvious that ordeals such as rape and bullying have adverse effects on schooling, events like surgery or childbirth are also life changing.

Since (most) adolescents are spending a major portion of the day at school, how could the personal *not* intrude? Moqvist (2003) posited schools as a government apparatus for promoting the health and welfare of youth, which would imply a willingness to address those aspects of student life that affect their school experience. The comment by the student in an alternative school who liked the ability to take ten minutes to "cool down" on a troublesome day indicates how a school can help youth stay engaged, rather than punish emotions.

Coleman (1991) felt that school was inadequate to handle the changes in family structure that occurred as society changed from a family centered to consumer-oriented society. Youth self care, lack of supervision, changes in family structure, access to drugs and the persistence of childhood poverty all adversely affect youth. Those effects in turn impact their ability to conform to the school environment. However, the comments in this study indicated that regular

schools would prefer not to be aware of those aspects of student lives beyond school doors.

The doors are breached daily, however, and who then handles this intrusion? Many adults felt that teachers are there to teach, and did not expect them to be social workers. Beyond being alert for signs of depression, fatigue and stress, they felt it was not a teacher's role to address the ways in which personal circumstances affect students. Schools with mental health or drug and alcohol counselors are trying to address these concerns. Results from the OSPI data showed that schools with a higher presence of these counselors had higher odds of truancy, although this is likely tied to a higher number of them in high schools, rather than any causal relation. Parents and youth workers both wanted more of these counselors, and at lower grade levels. They felt that education about the danger of drugs and alcohol, and access to mental health resources, should start in middle school when truancy and other problems often become apparent. But simply adding more counselors is not enough, since they often have a high number of students under their purview. They also have a limited scope of responsibility, when what is needed is to consider how to assist students with challenging circumstances to stay engaged with school.

Acknowledging that the personal is going to influence students' ability to concentrate, think, and behave appropriately would mean acknowledging students rights to "be people." It would recognize that youth need adults at school in ways that extend beyond academics. While school reform efforts in the last decade focused on high-stakes testing and schools' academic standings, the ability to reach those goals is mediated by what the student population brings to the classroom. Without adequate means of addressing what occurs outside the classroom in the ways that it affects students' learning capacity, schools will find it difficult to make the academic progress they want.

Challenges to handling the personal

In fairness to teachers and parents, the "work" of relating to an adolescent who is not interested in engaging is grinding. Parents reported their feelings of hopelessness, ineffectiveness and exhaustion from trying to find a way to

redirect their children. Teachers expressed their frustration at trying to teach distracted youth with intermittent attendance.

The study did not measure outcomes for the anti-truancy, behavior modification efforts at the alternative schools. Still, efforts at Union Gap to provide an appropriate school environment appeared to be more successful than those at Pine Grove, if only because attendance was higher. Union Gap students had energy — they got up from their seats, wandered around, horsed around with each other, picked things up, put them down, repeated questions until getting an answer. The classroom seemed ever on the verge of pandemonium but never was. At Pine Grove, students started off subdued and appeared more difficult to find a way to relate to. One student introduced himself as "Mr. Sex" the first day, but after that rarely attended. One young woman showed up in school for the sole reason of standing in the middle of the hall and singing while making "fashion poses," then left and returned once to create a minor altercation with another student. Although some students at Union Gap napped occasionally, most engaged in *something* during class time, even if admiring cars and designing gang symbols on the internet. Other than the two regular attendees at Pine Grove, those who engaged while in class were not present very much, and those who showed up more often were not particularly engaged.

The geographic solution of sending students to alternative schools for misbehavior or truancy worked better at Union Gap. The students were younger, and the adults were clearly in charge. Neither autocratic nor unfair, they gave personal attention to each student. Teachers there also experienced the frustration of preparing lessons and trying to educate intermittent attendees, but classes were fuller and the same faces showed up often.

Many of the students at Pine Grove were older, and fresh out of juvenile detention. Already decoupled from regular schooling, they had little internal incentive to attend. The rule that a student must appear once every 20 days to stay enrolled, for instance, meant that many students appeared once every 20 days, making continuity all but impossible. The teachers worked within a system that was under-staffed and under-funded to handle that type of chronic truancy, but did what they could to reengage them. They tailored instruction to each student, despite student absences creating more work than satisfaction.

However, they were working with youth long past the end of their regular school experience.

This study did not delve into student records, so student disciplinary histories and whether learning disabilities were ever suspected or tested are unknown. But parent descriptions of their children's path through school pointed to truancy as a sign of lack of attention to a student's situation at the appropriate point in their schooling.

This is not to ignore students' responsibility for how they handled themselves at school, choosing to conform or rebel, attend or skip out. But for the students with challenging situations, the schools' failure to consider or address the potential effects on student engagement fed their growing disaffection. Some students were empowered in the wrong direction by teacher or administrator overreactions to minor incidents. Schools failed to take proactive steps for students absent due to serious illness. Long searches for placement, allowed ongoing drift away from the habit of school. From the parent's perspective, they often felt stymied when trying to develop a relationship with school personnel, disappointed by the school's ignorance of the law and limited problem-solving capabilities.

Parents were frustrated by trying to operate within systems that place accountability on them by viewing the family as the major sources of problem behavior while simultaneously hoping that parents will be the main venue for addressing that behavior. While the comments about irresponsible parents indicate the ways that some parents do not recognize or value their role in their children's education, the parents in this study did what they could to support their children. They tried to be responsible, but lacked the ability to insist on steps such as mental health screenings or counseling because age of consent (and refusal) for those services is 13 in Washington. Additionally, parents and other adults agreed that most youth with problems resist the idea of treatment.

If access to medical and mental health care is granted under the model that posits adult rationality to adolescents, then the right to obtain these services without parent permission or knowledge must contain the right to refuse them. As Lowden (2002) points out, rights to consent without the corresponding rights to refusal are not rights. Yet these rights conflict with the right to an education

when drug or alcohol abuse, undiagnosed learning disabilities, depression or reactions to difficult circumstances interfere with the ability to perform adequately at school.

Youth rights to self-determination were behind the legislation granting minors the right to consent at 13, acknowledging their need for medical and mental health care without parent knowledge. Given that parent control over these aspects of young people's lives could wind up doing harm, granting these rights was reasonable. But Hafen (1996) felt that the ability to get counseling, help for addiction or access to birth control, for instance, were not so much about granting power to young people so they could participate in life like adults, but about protecting them from the known, harmful and life-changing consequences of bad choices. As Hafen is writing from the pro-family right wing, it would be easy to dismiss his concerns as an attempt to deny rights to youth. But his point about the age of consent is worth considering.

A better model would have considered those rights in a framework that included community and parents' rights. Finding out after the fact that a child's birth control has failed, or that they felt suicidal, or had other serious situations leaves parents in the position of being accountable without being able to exercise responsibility. A different model would find a way to balance protection and power.

Winnicott (1965) discussed the need for "good management" around youth. That good management is an adult responsibility. Assuming that autonomy is synonymous with productive independence is a mistake. That assumption is a way for adults to renege on their responsibility towards youth, especially "bad" youth who not only make relationships more difficult, but want and demand more autonomy. Rather than punish those who do not fit the mold, schools have a responsibility to change that mold and keep them participating in school. LaPointe (2004) wanted schools to incorporate student needs for self-direction in the classroom. Suspensions, transfers, overreactions and punitive attitudes fail that goal. The later regrets of dropouts (Bridgeland, et al., 2006) facing life's realities are a sign that the adult world failed to find a method and a place for youth to develop their autonomy in ways that generated adequate long-term effects. Truancy, as an early indicator of dropping out, is a sign that

participation rights are not being met, and a signal that provision rights are broken, that the right to an education is contravened.

Provision Rights And The School Environment

Adults are paid to go to work and the paycheck is a predictable incentive, even for jobs they do not like. Yet adults expect youth to be inspired by the long-term incentives for education, with advice and admonishments about their future. When school is not a good place to be, these words and long-term plans pale in comparison to avoiding pain or seeking pleasure.

Mere advice had little effect on the students on this study. For instance, the mother who told her son that his future plans depended on achieving a high school diploma found that her guidance did not jar him out of his daydreams and inspire his attendance. Other parents, and school personnel, too, advised youth about the possible outcomes of their actions every day. But the needs of the moment won, needs often centered on other connections. Student comments about skipping class to visit old friends at old schools, and youth worker comments tie in with research that school attachment is not about academics, but about relationships (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Hunt & Hopko, 2009; Ozer, Emily J., et al., 2008). Truancy, then, indicates a breakdown in the relationships between students and other people in school.

Chronic Truancy Also A "Canary" For Schools

Just as truancy is called the "canary in the coal mine" for students, high truancy counts should be that same canary for a school and district. The range of students with general truancy could be anticipated to follow the shape of the means curve for districts, but it did not. Even in districts with low overall truancy, some schools had very high rates. This can be interpreted as the one "bad" school, but that only begs the question of why there would be one "bad" school.

For instance, districts with high weapons incidents had higher odds of general and chronic truancy. Student weapons incidents indicate the presence of gangs, or places that are unsafe experiencing social disintegration. These districts also had a bigger gap between chronic absentees and petitions filed, meaning

that follow up and filing for chronic truants was more difficult, or perceived as not worthwhile.

The change in odds in this study indicated that race, ethnicity and poverty were less important than school environment factors such as teacher insensitivity, punitive approaches to truancy and methods of parent notification. These are measures of how adults in school relate to students and their parents. While others find unfair disciplinary actions disproportionately used with poor and racial/ethnic minorities, (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1997; Skiba & Peterson, 2000) those measures are part of a larger picture that is not reflected in this data. However, schools with high Black and Hispanic percentages had lower odds of filing truancy petitions. If filing is a way to demonstrate seriousness about education, then lower filing rates for some ethnic minorities shows bias in a lack of belief or interest in their success. But again, unlike other studies that only report significance, this study finds that the changes in the odds do not exceed 5%. This finding perturbs the common focus on student characteristics and indicates that there are bigger factors that contribute to truancy.

Student comments echoed others' assessment that having teachers with good organizational and management skill fosters school attachment (McNeely & Falci, 2004; Noguera, 1995, 2007). Teacher fairness was an issue. Some comments indicated that perennial complaints by students of "it's not fair" are developmentally based. In that case, issues of fair treatment should be paramount. Simply telling youth "life isn't fair" does not begin to address the ways in which one handles that unfairness, nor provides ways to think about how to remedy the problem. Dismissing or normalizing unfairness stems from the idea of school as a privilege rather than a right and ignores the ways in which youth could participate in a discussion of what constitutes fair treatment. Fine (1997), Willis (1977), Bowditch (1993), and Henderson (2008) documented the ways that teachers and other school authorities define and construct troublemakers within the school through labeling, expectations and treatment. Yet that construction is not inevitable. There is current knowledge about how to implement better classroom behavior management, although most teachers are not aware of them (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Spencer (2009) and Kearney (2003) mentioned the need for more professional development for teachers to promote

fair and engaging classroom management techniques that foster school attachment. LaPointe (2004) conducted a case study, using video to demonstrate the kinds of changes that calmed an escalating classroom. Skiba (2000) also called for more conflict resolution strategies so that disruptive behavior can be handled within the school.

The survey results would seem to support this assessment, as schools that had less punitive policies showed 0.6 less odds of having chronic truants. Also, higher chronic truancy coincided with schools that used cameras and security staff. While student safety is one reason to consider stiffer security measures, the need for those measures could prompt a discussion to make changes in the school environment to gradually reduce or eliminate punitive security measures, instead of using them as solutions. The predictions based on changes to these measures point to creating a school atmosphere that is less authoritarian and less punitive, with room for mistakes and corrections, rather than zero- or low-tolerance solutions.

Given that transitions were difficult for many students, as reported by research and corroborated by parent interviews, more attention to those transitions, or to delaying transitions could ease the passage from elementary to middle, middle to high school. Social workers felt that middle school started too early, that although there was a noticeable difference between 5th and 6th graders, that final year of 6th grade in elementary school (rather than first year of middle school) helped youth solidify their identity as competent and mature people.

Bullying was a factor in two cases. Research shows the importance of bullying in school disengagement (Attwood & Croll, 2006; Davies & Lee, 2006; MacDonald & Marsh, 2004; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991; Skiba & Peterson, 2000), yet many schools still tolerate that behavior. Lee talks about the difficulties schools face when handling ambiguity (1999), and the line between teasing and bullying is a fine one. Yet failing to draw that line is to be complicit with harassment, if not persecution.

Another example would be ignorance of drug, alcohol and weapons use among students, or denying that truancy exists in a particular school or district. Schools have been criticized for assuming that youth are “at-risk,” but the

opposite assumption proved as damaging, when districts deny having truants or drug abuse. Believing a particular school population is "good" was a way to ignore problems that disturbed the self-images of "good" school districts.

Schools that overreact to minor behavior issues tell youth that their presence is too powerful to be tolerated, a message that no one would admit to deliberately sending. The comments that "kids say stuff, day in day out," and that "attitude" is normal indicate that some school personnel understand how adults have a responsibility to act appropriately as youth test boundaries. Winnicott (1965) said that youth need environmental reliability and security in order to challenge it as a healthy part of growing up. That some of this normal defiance, which manifests as insubordination or misconduct, becomes conflated with school violence (Ruddick, 2006), is a failure on school's part to understand and manage normal adolescent development. Certainly, what teachers choose to hear (or ignore) can go a long way towards ameliorating or contributing to potential classroom conflict (McCourt, 2005).

Improving Provision in Schools

General statements such as creating a better school climate, damping school violence (Kearney, 2008), paying attention to personal relations (Attwood & Croll, 2006) and reducing student anonymity (Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, 2002) sound reasonable but do not indicate how to meet these goals. More useful and specific suggestions from youth, parents, school personnel and youth workers parallel suggestions about improving school environments in the literature.

In a study of 10 Boston schools that tried to implement reforms, Noguera (2004) found that the most successful schools had a "laser like focus on teaching and learning" (2004, p. 30), rather than curriculum, as Davies' (2006) interviews with professionals indicated. That focus also contrasts with the current emphasis on standardized test results and enforcing high expectations of good behavior. Paying attention to student learning improved school attachment, since it meant closely tracking how students were responding to teaching methods. Ideally, that focus on teaching and learning occurs before students begin to disengage. Once they turn away from school and learning, re-engaging them is difficult, as the teachers at the two alternative sites experienced, in spite of their dedication.

Schools can promote a sense of belonging through clubs, rallies and other school-wide efforts (Ozer, Emily J., et al., 2008). Small group activities and teachers' efforts to know students' names and provide encouragement reduce anonymity and promote student bonding. This may be easier in a smaller school (Noguera, 2004; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991), where school staff can know the students, but a deliberate effort to recognize each student is still required. The girl who was teased and bullied and the boy with over 90 absences attended small schools, but they were not noticed and attended to. The need for schools to welcome all students and pay attention to them is more important than size.

The photographs that students took echo aspects of the suggestions for making a good school environment. Students described the bedrooms, back yards, community centers, local streets and friends as places of safety, comfort, peace and quiet. Their destinations when skipping school were either places of tranquility (home, library) or interest and excitement (malls, downtown). The qualities of these places imply that schools were neither interesting nor comfortable for these students. Therefore, schools that make improvements in those directions should see increased attendance.

The survey results yielded two other areas that affected chronic truancy and are under district control. High needs schools, with failing infrastructures and outdated resources were 1.7 times as likely to have chronic truants as those with adequate facilities. Although there are competing opinions, older adolescents often benefit from starting school later in the morning (Wahlstrom, 2002), and survey results indicated that schools with earlier starting times were 1.4 times more likely to have chronic truants. While neither of these changes would be easy to implement, they have a clear connection to school environment and student's daily experience.

This research did not find significance in two areas of attachment that others have demonstrated. Hunt and Hopko (2009) found a negative correlation between sports involvement and absenteeism, but this study's survey results did not. However, survey measures included other activities and affordability, so they do not correspond. Also, Spencer (2009) found a need for better transitional bilingual and overall emotional support for students. Kearney (2008) felt that making school transitions less stressful would prevent disengagement. Survey

results disagreed with this in terms of odds, but the findings were not significant, so a better or different set of measures would unpack that discrepancy.

Predictions

In order to further explore topics covered in the survey, a series of predictive models tested whether implementing certain policies could reduce the number of students with chronic unexcused absences.

The predictive portion of the study tested whether increased teacher sensitivity, improved parent support, personal notification of absences and less punitive policies around truancy and tardiness appeared to decrease the odds of a school having higher numbers of chronically absent students. The predictive model supports research that prescribes remedies for school disengagement. Increased teacher sensitivity is way of paying attention to intergenerational relations. Finding ways to involve parents and better notification would indicate a desire to work with parents on more even footing than at present. Finally, less punitive policies treat the student as a person first, and promote authoritative behavior in adults. Second chances, allowing students to catch up their missed work, and finding non-punitive ways to deal with tardiness are ways that schools can lessen the polarization of students into "good" and "bad."

Increased teacher sensitivity is a way to pay attention to relations with students, to provide that "good management" Winnicott (1965) mentioned. Teacher-student rapport is a prime arena for intergenerational exchange. Students want teachers who are organized, prepared and good at teaching (Noguera, 2007; Ozer, Emily J., et al., 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). But students in the study complained about teachers who lost homework or made inappropriate comments. The variation in teachers' abilities to track absences as reported by adult subjects meant that some students were truant without anyone noticing their absences. This implied that no one noticed them as people, and their ongoing absences should not have been unexpected.

Better parent-teacher relations is on many lists of "things to do" about truancy (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Kearney, 2008; Lyon & Cotler, 2007; Noguera & Akom, 2000). Parents in the study liked having a relationship with the school but found it increasingly difficult at higher grade levels. They did not appreciate

having to educate school personnel about Becca, nor the attitudes some teachers had towards them once their child was skipping school. Those who went for long time periods without notification were angry at the system for not informing them in timely manner, or wondered why schools bother with computerized tracking when it was inaccurate and outdated. Outreach to families, empowering parents (Noguera & Akom, 2000; Zhang, M., 2007) and moving "beyond the building" to work with families through home visits (Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, 2002) can address some of the alienation that parents report (Davies & Lee, 2006; Fine, 1997).

Unfortunately, without a reliable and generally agreed-on measure, there is no way to determine what improvements would work in any particular school situation. Assessing and addressing truancy depends on accurate assessment. Therefore, appropriate measurement is an aspect of provision rights.

Measure As An Aspect Of Provision

"Mrs. Nesbitt has her own methods of attendance."

"Mrs. Nesbitt" is an alias, but the comment from one of the data records is not. It bears witness to the idiosyncratic nature of tracking attendance. The validity checks on the data revealed some confusion about how data was tracked. Errors are expected with a system that asks over 3000 schools to fill out forms, but the study revealed a number of difficulties with the way that truancy is tracked in Washington.

First, truancy is only reported publicly on the OSPI website for grades K-8. The rate of unexcused absences, not the number of students, is reported. This means that rates for the least affected elementary and middle schools are public, but nothing is available for high schools, where the bulk of truancy occurs. The focus on absence rates, rather than students with absences, further distances the measure from the students and obscures differences between schools. The same rate can indicate no problem in one setting (a high number of occasional absentees) but a concern in another (a core set of chronic absentees).

Second, the data errors indicated that, at the time, there were no validity checks on incoming data. Even a simple comparison with prior years' figures would have brought some of the data into question, but no mechanism for

follow-up existed. As with any measures, the hoary adage "garbage in, garbage out" applies. While the numbers of errors did not make a significant difference at the state level, they make a difference at district and school levels. With funding driven partially by the number of attending students, too-high truancy numbers deflate enrollment and affect the Adequate Yearly Progress in place under the No Child Left Behind Act.

The form used to convey information from school to OSPI was confusing. The form lacked any type of simple cross-check, and it would easy to enter the same number twice inadvertently. Nothing indicated whether the SUA count included or excluded the SUA5 and SUA10 counts.

Next, the counts were not broken out in any way by race/ethnicity or free/reduced meals — the standard categories for analysis in other available data, including the K-8 rates. Since higher dropout and absence rates for some ethnic minorities and in poorer districts argue against the claim that truancy is heterogenous, this oversight in tracking precludes any analysis in that direction.

Using October enrollment for calculations creates further difficulties. This is a time-honored statistic, but the schools with high turnover and SUA10 or SUA greater than enrollment mean that it is a dubious number. More than one interview subject felt that schools would wait until October to keep enrollment up, then start transferring "problem students" out to the alternative schools, a process also reported by Fine (1997). An October – May comparison would be more useful. In addition, elementary school truancy is understudied but a rising concern. Inaccurate data could over or understate the real numbers. Moreover, a measure of the proportion of truant students who develop chronic absenteeism and become eligible for a truancy petition is important for the state education budget. Accurate counts are imperative.

Schools are overloaded with statistics to track, but truancy should be considered a "root" measure, a sign of other problems in a school. The Becca Bill requires districts to track and report truancy. Districts try to fulfill the reporting requirement, but their methods are varied. "Mrs. Nebitt's methods" may in fact disturb statewide truancy numbers. Some districts put attendance and assignment information on the internet, but parents often found the data

outdated or inaccurate, and suspected that the computer systems were a way for districts to appear to be "doing something." Yet districts face substantial challenges when using computerized systems as a way of tracking student attendance. The expense is prohibitive for many and involves time consuming data entry (Reid, 2008; Spencer, 2009), with steep learning curves for the users.

If, as Levitas (1999) says, what is defined and measured can then be given attention that reflects care and concern, then truancy reporting in Washington State shows the intention to care. But the state of measurement also demonstrates that we are not comfortable with the work required to gather accurate and meaningful numbers. Schools that do not take attendance or that allow long absences before noticing are telling youth that their presence is not important, another message that no one would admit to deliberately sending.

Part of the difficulty in tracking student absences is that tracking *any* truancy is needed in order to determine if chronic habits are forming, and this is a difficult mission. In a large high school, given 2000 students with 5-6 classes each per day, potential cuts loom large. However, for many schools, tracking chronic students is a much smaller task, where personal attention to the student and parents would have an impact.

Better tracking would also let us unpack the "good-kid, bad-kid" dichotomy. We can at least re-label the "good" kids as "on-the-fence" (although the phrase "pushing the agnostic kids into attendance" does not scan as easily as "keeping the good kids good"). Given the challenges that most of the truant students in the study faced, their lack of interest in school is not as surprising as those who stress the deviant nature of truancy suppose. The parent experiences here often mirror the difficulties exposed in other research (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1997). Fine said that schools want parents to help students with homework, motivate them and support the school at home. But parents are held accountable without the school system providing a means to discuss that accountability. This places parents in a position of negotiating with a needed institution that can hurt them or their children (Fine, 1997). Winnicott (1965) felt that adolescent difficulties are often due to environmental failure, so that truancy is also a failure of the school-parent nexus.

Schools Externalizing

The phrase "keeping the good kids good" ties to Ruddick's thesis (2006) that schooling is configured around two different student objects, the "response-ready" fully socialized child, and the "amoral" child who requires intervention. Ruddick discussed how this division allows adults to see incipient criminality in youth who are not fully socialized. Splitting youth into "good" and "not-so-good" is one way of offloading adult responsibility. Adults can assume that "good" youth will take advantage of the education that school offers and proceed to college. If the "not-so-good" ones are already lost, their being conflated with their becoming, then regular schools do not have to address their needs. Truants, especially chronic truants, fall under this definition because of the evidence that ties truancy to dropout, and dropout to a host of personal and societal ills. Once students disengage from school, they become an anomaly, a "cost," and schools have reason to externalize those costs, those students, in the form of suspensions, expulsions and transfers.

Coleman (1991) noted that with busing and consolidation, schools draw less on the social capital of their surrounding community. Comments from the interviews indicated that adults were aware of this, in their calls for teachers to live near where they work and for schools to practice more parent outreach. In large school districts, transferring students from regular to alternative schools weakens ties to school. Behavior problems resulting in multiple suspensions "tag" a student as undesirable. While any one school's decision to exclude someone with a history of drug use, weapons or violence is understandable, long searches for placement are a failure on the school system's part to identify and address problems before they reach that stage. Even with students who were ill, and not behavior challenges, the specifics of how to handle their illness were not forthcoming from the schools. Parents had to find out on their own, or were threatened with legal action before becoming aware of the process that allows youth with long-term health problems to continue their education.

The parent comment that schools "do what they know to do" evidenced some sympathy for the challenges school face with students who do not like the environment. Yet that statement implies that schools could learn more about

what to do, and glides over the ways in which "what they know to do" contributes to the problem. Training and knowledge for good classroom management exist (Skiba & Peterson, 2000), and while schools are conflicted about having to handle the personal at school, the evidence seems to indicate that some consideration for student situations is necessary. For instance, when students receive social promotion, problems of early learning disability are ignored and concerns arising in elementary school are handed off to middle school. The IEP that social workers wanted for every incoming 8th grade student echoes Lyon's (2007) recommended approach of constructing individualized interventions.

Punitive stances towards misbehavior do not uncover the complexity of student lives. If students are viewed as problems, or "not-so-good," or "bad apples," they become "costs." Problem students (or students with problems) need more time and attention than the system is willing to provide. Expulsion and suspensions leading to expulsion push responsibility back on parents. Transfers to alternative schools push responsibility to a different location and its personnel. Filing a Becca petition pushes responsibility out to the legal system. These actions relieve schools of having to increase their store of knowledge about "what to do." They externalize the costs of truancy.

A parallel exists with the way that businesses externalize costs. Schools externalize challenging students, which is reminiscent of Bauman's (2004) concept of waste in capitalist societies, of the search for perfection that requires jettisoning that which is imperfect. He points out that we are running out of places to absorb the extra byproducts. For education, this means that those who do not fit the system have nowhere good in society to go, unlike other eras when industrial expansion, economic boom phases in the westward migration and farming absorbed those who did not finish high school. The growth of prisons as "reservations" (p. 8) for those who come up against zero-tolerance policies is part of how modern society handles those who do not conform.

The process of externalizing students contrasts with parents' stated desires to have what happens at school be handled at school, barring violence, weapons or illegal activities like drug abuse. Ruddick (2006) said that parents once sent their children for public education believing that the process of

schooling would “prevent inappropriately precocious or delinquent behaviors and instill appropriate skills and training” (p. 57). Instead, schools remove those who do not already have those appropriate skills through suspension, expulsion or mishandling of minor incidents. Students exploit this strategy to their own ends. Some youth in the study deliberately provoked suspension or being sent to sit in the hall as a way to avoid school. Yet students in other studies agreed with some of the parents in this one for having what happens at school get handled at school. The student suggestions from Noguera’s interviews (2004) were mentioned earlier and cover more than truancy. The list of penalties such as Saturday school for skipping, writing letters of apology or cleaning duties indicate a desire for material, rapid and in-school consequences that put responsibility back on the student. It appears that both students and parents want youth under the wing of school.

Protection Rights and Becca

Aitken (2004) quoted Winnicott, who said that the cure for adolescence is time, and youth will age. How youth are situated in society as they enter young adulthood is highly dependent on their education. While Donzelot’s (1979) “tutelary complex” of law, school and medicine is criticized for the ways it coerces youth, these criticisms ignore the ramifications when youth needs are not met. The choice is not between life with or without the "complex". It is, in this country at this time, a choice between which "complex" the youth will wind up in, or a choice between complex now or complex later. Without an education, the odds are higher that students enter low-paying jobs, experience prison or rely on welfare. Those futures are harsher than the ones available with even a minimum of a high school diploma. They are considerably more oppressive than the harassment of a Becca petition, or a night in juvenile detention.

The Gap In Becca Filings - Care or Disregard?

For some youth, Becca is the first real indication of adult interest in their education, which is in itself a sign that something has gone awry in their school experience. Model results from the OSPI data confirmed a gap between the number of chronically truant students and the number of filings. After all, if all

students who were eligible were filed on, the court system would be overwhelmed, as petitions that are filed handle 30% of chronic truants. Yet the data does not contain any good way to measure whether that gap is from successful pre-filing interventions, transfers to alternative schools or other factors that deter filing. The survey results indicated that in spite of common complaints about the cost of filing Becca petitions, money was not a significant factor for failure to file. The most important reason, aging out of the system, shows that many schools delay timely responses to truancy and allow them to externalize these youth through the passage of time. Schools that attempt to address truancy through some form of anti-truancy program had more chronic truancy, but less of a gap in filing, indicating that their efforts are necessary and possibly successful.

Becca — The Classic Critique

Initial hopes for Becca were that the law would protect youth from the long-term consequences of their actions by shepherding them back to school. It was also expected to protect society from the effects of those long-term consequences, and Becca can be considered an application of protection rights. A classic children's geography critique of Becca would be that it infringes on youth rights by adopting punitive measures to enforce societal norms, one of which is school attendance. Becca is decidedly becoming-focused, with its emphasis on youth futures. A conservative critique is that Becca is an invasion of the family by the state and school, a takeover of parental roles. By empowering schools to pursue truants through the courts, the state embroils the family in a system that is heavy-handed and punitive.

The initial objections to the Bill were that courts would rush youth to detention, doing more harm than the acts warranted. These fears were greater for other status offenses (underage drinking or running away) than for truancy, although the urge to "do something" about truancy was also present. When legal workers observed that by the time a truancy petition is filed the schools want the court to "teach [the student] a lesson", it indicates that the process at school frustrates adults, too. The comment also shows school's desire to offload responsibility. Schools expect the courts to institute rapid and effective

punishment, but those initial fears of a hasty and ill-considered judicial process underpin rules that keep the court from “doing something” quickly.

One reason for timing delays is that adults hope the fear of court will inspire youth to return to school before they reach require a petition. Parents mentioned schools that allowed multiple agreements to be written and broken before filing, or that never filed on students with chronic absences. Once a petition is filed, the court drags things out in hopes that the youth in question will return to school of his or her own free will, without having to resort to contempt motions or juvenile detention. This approach appears to treat youth like adults, in that it expects them to look at the long term. Those who work with youth say that youth do not do that, they see it as a way to get away with things until the last possible minute.

The lack of grandfathering in the Boruchowitz decision is an example of how adult driven systems for youth violate one set of rights while upholding another. Many adults feared that the decision would delay specific cases, since defense lawyers would argue that their clients lacked representation at the fact-finding hearing and deserved to start the process over with a lawyer present. The ruling upholds rights of representation, but violates rights to a timely process for students with open cases. Some felt that the intent was good, but the attorney would be better placed earlier, during the school hearing where the decision about filing a petition is made. Social workers who were present at these hearings described how litanies of past behavior, acts with no bearing on the actual truancy, would be paraded and used to diminish students. The litany might be wrong, but no one is required to act on the child’s defense. Parents rarely show up and social workers are only infrequently involved.

The interviews also indicated that court is judge dependent (as is true for adults, too), so that one youth could see no consequences for a long time while another is quickly held in contempt when breaking the stipulated agreement. The one judge that cancelled all truancy petitions hearings rather than sort through last years’ cases is an example of this dependency.

Becca — The Other Critique

The other critique is that it does not reach far enough, and is not implemented consistently around the state. It is already noted that some counties have well-integrated systems for reaching students and families with complex challenges, but most do not. Becca's implementation is neither homogenous nor equally effective throughout the state (Miller, M., et al., 2009). While some youth persevere despite challenges and bad schools, others disappear from the system. One way to consider truancy is as an example of agency, of youth exercising their choice to avoid a difficult school or go to a more appealing environment. However, as Ruddick (2007a) points out, only some youth agency is approved. Disapproval of truancy is more than nominal, extending beyond parent and school within Washington State to the truancy portion of the Becca Bill. Yet for all its intent, and for all the situations where students have re-engaged with school, its scope is still limited.

From interviews, it appears that Becca reaches more of the students with challenging situations when it is embedded in a community-wide effort, also supporting research that finds anti-truancy efforts work best when they are part of comprehensive plan (Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, 2002; Kearney, 2008; Sheldon, 2009). In the best application of Becca, the child's unique situation and self-determination is taken into account. Barriers to attendance are identified and remedied, and the gravity of the situation demonstrated. When used as part of a greater effort that addresses each youth's complications it is more likely be more successful than when used as punishment alone. Although Zhang (2007) found that using punitive measures to handle truancy was not especially effective, for some youth in this study, court was the only consequence that ever mattered to them. Because it "works" for certain youth, progress reports on its efficacy consider it a qualified success.

Still, that success is dependent on an adult system that has only certain ideas of rights to work with. Rights to representation are part of the system, but they do not extend into the school, where subjects felt they were most needed. The difference between what executive-level subjects had to say about parent notification requirements and parent complaints of non-notification is an

example of how inconsistent tracking and notification disrupt participation rights.

Furthermore, Becca does not involve all chronic truants. Youth with complex barriers cannot be required to participate in counseling, obtain a psychiatric exam, or be tested for learning disabilities. The most the court can do is request a drug and alcohol evaluation and participation in some form of treatment if necessary. For some situations, then, the right of refusal prevents the very actions that could possibly remedy the situation.

Social Services

Freeman, writing from the early 1980s, said that youth who "do wrong" have the right to expect punishment (1981, p. 225) not treatment, the right not to be viewed as targets for services. He saw society's view of status offenses as not being about the act itself — drinking, truancy, running away — but about seeing the act as indicative of underlying psychological trouble. That perspective opens the doors to medicalizing "bad" behavior, a process youth resist. Under his view, punishment is the appropriate way to handle truancy, rather than services, as it lets youth make decisions about their behavior without the psychiatric system attempting to re-normalize them. Freeman maintained that long-term fears about youth with status offenses are not supported by the data, but cited no studies in proof of his assertion. Research since then refutes his claim (Zhang, D., et al., 2007).

But Freeman has unproven faith in punishment. Unlike the "good" youth, fear of punishment did not deter truancy for many youth in the study, at least not initially. Whether at home or at school, and despite court orders, youth evaded the system. Some required the uncomfortable consequence of a short stay in juvenile detention and/or repeated court appearances before they took school seriously. Because "good" kids respond well to early stages of a truancy petition, and "bad" kids often do not, Freeman's way would continue to "keep the good kids good" and leave the rest to their fate. In contrast, Kearney found that long-term follow-up studies of youth with interventions show they went on to some success in adult life, although around 30% still had social or psychological problems.

Youth are denied a right to that "some success" as adults because of trepidation about state intervention in the family that make the regulation of that intervention unclear (Hafen & Hafen, 1996; Pardeck, 2002), fears of abuse of adult power (John, 2003), or general lack of interest in those youth who do not fit models of good citizens (Roche, 1999). As a form of state intervention, Becca is adult-heavy, with its reliance on adult forms of agreement, time delays and emphasis on the threat of court. Schools are also adult-driven, with little room for the personal and systems that externalize students who do not fit well into its traditional structure. Both point to a failure of adult responsibility toward youth, by failing to identify and meet unmet needs, not holding them accountable within a system that respects them, or not creating a respectful system in the first place.

One result of the school-Becca system being designed by adults lies in the wordiness of the whole process. The routine of attendance agreements at school, the conferences, the stipulated agreement in court, the contempt motions for breaking the agreement, etc., are word-heavy tactics. Students demonstrated a preference for less verbosity. At the very end of the last photography class, one of the young women said how much she liked photography because "we don't have to talk, we can just do it" and made a face about having to "talk about our feelings" in writing classes. The disinclination to discuss, and the desire for doing have their counterpart in the suggestions from students regarding discipline in Noguera's (2007) study. Students wanted accountability in the form of physical action, *not* agreements, conferences and talk.

Holding youth accountable, as Freeman indicated they want, is not mutually exclusive with services. Services are an avenue to address the difficulties that life circumstances, undetected learning disabilities or drug and alcohol abuse cause. Rodriguez (2009) pointed out that when a child has a caseworker, it tells the community that an adult cares for the child. The child also has an advocate when facing other institutions. Note that social service is not the same resource as the medical and psychiatric establishments. Services also include material help such as access to water, heat, light and food, counseling (compared to psychiatric diagnosis) and community resources. However,

material assistance or information and help in coordinating resources is not always enough.

Stoep (2003) found that 46% of students who did not complete school had some form of psychiatric disorder. Teachers at the alternative school felt that the students were disproportionately affected by ADD (Attention-Deficit Disorder), ADHD (Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) whether formally diagnosed or not. One interview subject said her brother always had difficulty in school and found out in college that he was dyslexic. He was an example of youth who compensate and get through school, but relying on individual heroics is poor policy. The idea of student heroes also reinforces the bifurcation of "good" and "bad." While others object to the stigma associated with diagnoses, questioning their rise or fall in popularity, the behaviors that define these conditions make regular schooling difficult. Youth with ADHD report being quick to anger, slow to learn, finding it hard to sit still and feeling out of control (Gallichan & Curle, 2008). The teacher opinions reinforce Spencer's (2009) contention that much truancy stems from unmet needs.

Ruddick (2006) rightly questions the rush to medicate children with mental disorders rather than examining environmental factors such as poverty or lack of parent support. She brings up the proliferation of terms for youth conditions (ADD, ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder), ADHD, attachment disorder, conduct disorder) and how, by defining them as disorders, the psychiatry field "disavows the continuum of treatable behaviors enshrined in the concept of juvenile delinquency and its universalizing institutions" (p. 66). Ruddick posits use of medical or psychiatric diagnoses as a means of social control of youth. They can be used as tools to make an "other" of disruptive youth and distance "bad" kids from a "good" school. The criticism that the diagnosis process demonizes children, and conflates their being and becoming is valid, but does not answer the basic question of how to address students with cognitive or emotional conditions when those conditions interfere with their own (and others') education. While defining the inability to focus, sit, complete tasks, read, or understand action and consequence as matter of different behavior is one way of countering descriptions of youth as defective, redefinition alone will not assist these students to succeed in school. Exploring poverty, diet, school environment

and parent support (Ruddick, 2006) might discover antecedents to truancy, and improving them would help students. However, this seems a standard remedy often called for and rarely implemented. Laudable as these goals are, the question for school engagement is how to recognize and attend to the "differences" on a day-to-day basis.

Under a punitive model that treats youth only as adults-in-the-making, those differences become moral failings that justify harsh consequences. Under a permissive model that treats youth only as as-good-as-adults in the present, those differences can be ignored or allowed to continue for fear of interfering with their personhood. However, ignorance does not typically lead to student success. For instance, several subjects felt that children with undiagnosed learning disabilities often get "social promotion," which merely delays problems until high school. By then, their differences from the general school population are obvious, and they are primed for failure as they fall further behind their peers socially and academically. In contrast, environments that were flexible and supportive, with instructors skilled at working with cognitive differences made school a better experience for ADHD youth (Gallichan & Curle, 2008). Those environmental characteristics could be expanded to encompass more students, as those with ADHD are not the only students with different behaviors. The environment Gallichan described sounds like an authoritative model for schooling that would attend to the differences apparent in some students in the study. If alternative schools are the site for this attention, then they need to be well funded so that whatever circumstances interfered with regular schooling can be identified and addressed. Promoting school attachment should not be left up to a handful of over-extended teachers who are dealing with hard-to-reach youth. Questions of learning disabilities, personal challenges, difficult family situations, drug and alcohol abuse or the host of interferences with education should be the first line of exploration, not the last. Adults abandon their responsibility to youth by avoiding these difficult questions, or using one approach to all situations. This is a failure to provide adequate caretaking, and blurs the boundary between provision and protection rights.

Power Rights And Responsibilities

Young people in Washington are legally required to attend school until they are 18 and the truancy portion of the Becca bill is an extension of that state power. While the presence or absence of organized youth power around questions of status offenses would be an interesting question, this study has little to do with young people finding their voice in a formal sense. Instead, this section discusses less formal power relations between youth and adults.

Power relations are not all equally invalid by virtue of their existence, nor necessarily abusive. It is possible to have good power in the form of leadership, knowledge and care. The medicine and psychiatry fields come under criticism for being invasive and normalizing but they can also be life changing for youth having severe emotional or mental difficulties. Advocates fear a legal system that disregards young people's personhood, yet law is the main venue for formalizing and enforcing youth rights. Winnicott (1965) asks who else would go to all the trouble of raising a child *except* the parents? And systems that deal with youth when they cannot be raised by their parents are known to be a poor substitute (Pardeck, 2002; Rodham, 1979).

Power can be defined as the ability to change one's circumstances. Adults, whether parents, educators or others who influence youth, fulfill youth rights to provision or protection based on their power. (Or they do not - the largest category of child maltreatment is neglect, as adults who are disenfranchised and poor often lack the power to provide for and protect their children.)

Power is not something handed off all at once when youth reach a certain age. Rights to self-determination proceed through a series of steps. In Washington, staying home alone for a few hours (age 10), confidential access to medical and mental health care (13), working (14), driving (15), consenting to sex (16), voting (18) and drinking (21) are formal markers that reinforce what happens informally within many families. Ideally, parents allow their children more leeway as they grow up and provide buffers for mistakes made along the way.

Socialization

School and parents are the main avenues for socialization, preparing youth to join the adult world. Socialization is not, however, a monopoly of any one group. Tensions exist between different adult subcultures as parent-child relations reproduce class values and practices (Coontz, 1988; Lareau, 2003). Social workers said that gang parents raise their children to be in the gang, middle-class college graduates want their children to go to university. The new sociology often assumes that socialization necessarily treats children as dangerous or inept and comes under fire for being coercive, something adults "do" to passive children (James & Prout, 1997). But few, if any, societies do not conduct some form of socialization (Coontz, 1988). Even ones with much freedom for youth take care to ensure that young people understand the social limits. Purdy (1992) found that in cultures that allow a great deal of freedom for older children (Danes, Norwegians and Ojibwa) this only occurs after a very strict childhood that inculcates social norms. Some could criticize a strict childhood as an example of overbearing adults, but it is also an example of the intersection of provision and power. Adults use their authority to institute practices that increase the odds of youth exercising power in ways that will not harm them or others.

The study raises more questions about the contest between different forms of socialization than the process per se. On one hand, there are the schools, the social workers, and many (if not most) parents who hope that the children in their care will grow up to some form of productive adulthood. Without saying this is a rigid fence, on the other side are all the forces that derail that transition: drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, neglect, violence, and adults who socialize youth in those directions. What came through in the interviews is the way in which the first system feeds into the second through neglecting or abusing those in its care. Negative teacher comments, suspensions, long searches for school placement and all the ways that schools ignore the personal side of student lives push many youth away from the education path. It is not a simple process, since drug abuse or gang membership may already be present, but these acts of adult power do nothing to re-engage students. They send a message that youth do not belong on

that path, either reinforcing or creating a door for the other way into adulthood - through jail, early pregnancy, addiction. Young people will be somewhere, so actions that send them away from school have the high risk of sending them through that door.

Attempts to eliminate socialization as a potential social good also ignore the ways that youth revitalize or reinterpret the process. Once freed from the burden of having to attend school, one young woman went to work and succeeded at her job. Another chose to join Job Corps in spite of his parent's hope that he attend college. In these cases, young people had skills and attitudes that let them make decisions about their place in society. One of the young men who skipped many times described wandering "anywhere and everywhere" around the city, exploring neighborhoods, parks and community centers without ever becoming involved with heavy drug, alcohol or gang activity. While skipping school for days on end was not a particularly good choice, the student in question used his freedom in personally satisfying ways that did no harm, and eventually returned to school.

Youth Agency & Responsibility

The young people in this study used their agency, or power, several ways. Much of what appeared troubling to schools and adults were attempts at problem solving. The young woman creating a new persona saw her old, "nerdy" self as a problem. Students who were transferred and lonely went looking for old friends at their old schools. The middle-school student who was shocked at how rude her peers were solved her vulnerability by outdoing them in rudeness. The young man whose 90+ absences went unnoticed at school found friends and activities at a community center. Many of these young people were taking care of their emotional needs, something that schools find difficult to address.

Resistance and rebellion are the other side of youth power. At Pine Grove, some students entered the building, but sat in the halls with their heads in their hands, resisting teachers' attempts to find out what they were thinking or feeling. Parents said that their children stopped attending not only school but church and other activities, refused to get up or to go to bed. Some of their children ran

away, stole, took drugs and drank. At the party after the photography class, one student returned again and again for pizza. Staff had asked students to limit themselves to 3 pieces so the rest of the school could share after the class had their turn. This student, when confronted with a second load of four slices of pizza in his hand, kept saying “no, I’m not” (taking pizza). This was autonomy, yes, but also the power to resist *any* encroachment of adult perspective. While it made sense for him to deny taking pizza in the moment (maybe he was ravenous) the obvious deviation from physical evidence and the hope that adults would agree was startling.

Society’s tendency to blame youth stems from this aspect of youth self-determination, that youth make decisions as adults do, and discounts decisions that do not follow adult timescales or reasoning. Adopting respect for youth in the moment entails respecting decisions that go against adult norms, and recognizing that adult definitions of well-being are not necessarily going to match adolescent ideas. It is not so much granting autonomy as acknowledging that it is always there. Just as some formerly “good kids” became truants, some “bad kids” returned to school. These choices were within their scope of power.

Trying to eliminate the concept of socialization, rather than supplement or revisit it, promotes a romantic, “natural” view of the child that is another way of fetishizing youth. Adults receive consequences for their actions. Getting fired, fined or jailed are possible results when adults break society’s rules. Youth autonomy, like adult autonomy, exists within a larger system that limits its extent. School is one place in that larger system where responsibility and self-determination can be practiced or derailed. This was the situation at Pine Grove.

One of the reasons the Pine Grove class was delayed for a term was the need for staff to regain control of the school. At some point in the prior year, the adults there “gave up” (probably with some understandable reasons for doing so) leaving the students free to jump on desks, surf the web, come and go at will, and listen to music during class. These acts interfered with classroom learning, which requires focus. In the year of the study, teachers and administrators were attempting to retake responsibility and re-train students to acceptable classroom behaviors, but the prior break in responsibility made it difficult. Behavior problems at Pine Grove seemed greater than those of Union Gap. At Pine Grove,

one of the sponsoring organization's digital cameras was stolen. On a day that class was not in session, a student entered school and attacked the principal and a teacher. Another teacher intervened, and the student took off before the police arrived. The incident shook everyone. Although the metal detectors there are an annoyance, one of the teachers wondered how much more severe the incident could have been if the student had brought weapons.

This should not paint too rosy a picture of Union Gap, however, where teachers instruct all visitors not to leave purses unattended. Some youth spent their time online or napping, and for a time the class had problems with student files being erased between classes.

These students represent a far edge of behavior in that they were not "good" kids and not expected to behave as "response-ready" children would, but that view dismisses both their rights to their own agency, and their rights to know how to participate in society. That knowledge comes through practice, and practice involves making minor errors, or even major ones in a space that hold them and does not reject them. One form of Winnicott's framework of good management is a flexible school environment where infraction are neither ignored nor over-reacted to. Notice that Winnicott did not advocate direct management *of* youth, nor did he view them as incapable or incompetent. Providing a framework where youth can practice adult skills, and be held accountable in ways that do not cause long-term problems, is an adult responsibility.

Adult Agency & Responsibility

Criticism of power relations between adults and children or teens has proven useful for unpacking the ways in which children's rights are violated. There is no question that the history of interaction with youth from an institutional standpoint is checkered with situations and stories of adults treating youth as less than people. Incarcerating youth for long periods for minor infractions (Castellano, 1986), arresting "street children" (John, 2003) or the push to medicate the "unruly" (Ruddick, 2006) are only a few examples of this. Less formally, youth experience negative acts of adult power through social systems that reinforce it, such as the vagaries of foster care that exacerbate child neglect

(Epstein, W. M., 1999), parents who use youth as unpaid family caretakers (NCES, N.d.), or schools that rush to push out unruly students (NCES, N.d.; Stearns & Glennie, 2006).

Adults avoiding responsibility

Interspliced with discussions of the need to hold youth accountable was the subtheme of ways in which adults avoid responsibility towards youth. Parents who condone alcohol and drug use, interfere with or otherwise fail to support their children's education are avoiding parental responsibilities. When parents are unaware of multiple absences, school administration is avoiding the responsibility of ensuring accurate and timely notification. When teachers are disorganized, or make disparaging comments, they are avoiding the responsibility of creating a positive classroom environment.

Some theories seek to decouple young people from adult control, such as critics of the ways in which families abuse power (John, 2003; Lowry, 1979; Saunders & Goddard, 2008) or the sad record of state interference in those families (Burt, 1979; Pardeck, 2002; Purdy, 1992). However, child abusing families and foster care are not the average way that families, other adults and youth interact. Focusing on the extremes of abuse of power ignores the ways in which power can be positive, or used for support rather than domination, as Holt and Holloway (2006) recognized. Nagging was one form of adult power that kept a young man in school. Parents also used their power to obtain restraining orders against dangerous boyfriends, go to the police station with their child for questioning, and demand placements in school. These actions would be difficult for many adolescents.

Youth want to make their own way, hold their own opinions and make their own decisions, but having a substructure of experienced adults to interact with affected many students' lives. Youth workers said that students "turn the corner when they are ready," and advocates continually encouraged truants and dropouts to return and finish their education. Some of these students did so, and one factor was the repeated adult messages that they were capable of earning their diploma. Whether they would have returned without that support is unclear. When parents defended their children against school tactics, or

supported their child's decisions, as in the case of the young woman who wanted private school and the one who went to Christian summer camp, they used their adult power in ways that affirmed their children's rights to be heard.

Kjørholt (2007, p. 33) acknowledged that "notions of childhood as being threatened by adult control and intervention represents, I suggest, a powerful position in discourses concerning what is (a good) childhood." While she was speaking of Norwegian society, the idea that eliminating rules decided by adults would create a better life for children is a general theme in discussions of children's rights and agency. This implies that adults and youth have only fraught relations, and that children are capable of creating adequate environments on their own.

While some research promotes the idea of children as "more creative" than adults, and therefore more capable of taking care of themselves without adult interference, Vygotsky (2004) argued with that claim, saying that adults have more experience with creativity and richer material to draw from. That argument can be extended to say that many adults have more information in general, and deeper past experience to draw from than youth. This does not imply that all adults are automatically better informed since adults, like youth, can make decisions that seem good in the moment but unravel their lives over time (Purdy, 1992).

Acknowledging and respecting youth rights to self-determination opens the door to their creative participation in the world. Yet taken to an extreme, by using youth rights as a shortcut to granting adult status, this philosophy becomes another way of avoiding the effort of providing care for young people. This was evident in the comments about adults backing off from the work of maintaining relationships with adolescents who were no longer the appealing children they once were. Rather than disparaging the ways in which adults impose upon youth, the opposite criticism came through in this study. Subjects felt that adults were not encouraging youth enough, making it easy for them to misbehave and not holding youth accountable for their actions. They pointed out that raising adolescents is not the same as caring for infants, but takes effort all the same. They took parents and schools to task for adult irresponsibility. One subject talked about how intergenerational common knowledge about raising

children is “just gone,” that she had to teach youth about the importance of proper nutrition, sleep, and, in this digital age, distractions. Her concerns echo Moqvist’s (2003) description of modern parents lacking tradition. One interviewee felt that this knowledge was not taught at home anymore, and wondered what will happen with the next generation, unmoored from prior knowledge. This subject recounted a class she sat in on where the teacher had to explain the alimentary canal system and questioned how students could get to adolescence without understanding basic biology.

Other comments indicated that the worst thing was to lie to youth, in the form of “soft-soap[ing],” being too easy on them, not holding them accountable. Those actions and words could be seen as another form of treating youth as helpless and incompetent. Acting as if everything would work out, no matter what choices were made in the moment, was failing to prepare youth for “the true effort life takes.” It demonstrated a lack of faith in youth abilities to make that effort. One example was the woman who constantly countered youth expectations of getting a high-paying industrial job without a high school diploma, a possibility in their parents’ day but not in the current economy. Another example is the attitude that “you can always get a G.E.D.,” in spite of the low return and success rate for that certificate[4].

Adults have less power than is granted by assuming that youth power means making decisions without adult “interference.” Even with school policy, parent concern and the legal system being brought to bear on some of the study’s students, they resisted attending school. Youth exercised the power they did have by foiling, resisting and ignoring adults.

Parents did not always use the power that they did have, in terms of arguing with the school system or demanding change. Some were ignorant about drugs and believed their children’s inventive tales that “explained” behavior a

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[4] Fine (1997, p. 86) found that 20% of those who attempted a G.E.D. succeeded. Rumberger (1987) said 50% of dropouts wanted a G.E.D., and 40% attained it, but he was speaking of California. Mishel and Roy (2006) painted a rosier picure for minorities, that of the 25% who do not graduate, half obtain a G.E.D.. Greene (2002) says G.E.D. information is inaccurate. For Washington, Aos (2005, p. 2) found that G.E.D. attainment rose starting from 1% in the early 70's to 6% in 2003.

different parent would recognize as signs of drug abuse. They did not challenge their children for inappropriate behaviors. For instance, fibbing at four is recognized as a learning stage, and not to be worried about or punished. Fibbing at fourteen is expected, but adult responsibility is to see through it and challenge youth to truth. Many were not aware that they could file a Truancy Petition. Social workers reported that many parents are not willing to go through the challenges of using the legal system to get their child back to school. This is understandable for parents with tenuous employment that would be threatened by multiple court appearances. One mother felt filing would show "profound disrespect" for her daughter. Finally, the attitude that once a youth gets bigger than the parent, there is not much a parent can do raises the question of whether those parents conceive power as punitive or coercive only. In contrast, the mother who "hassled" her son into attending school was smaller than her son, but not afraid to use her position of authority. For many parents, there was no solution except to recognize their child's will, and adjust their own expectations and behavior.

Parents reported that school personnel also misused power by overreacting to minor incidents, thus empowering the behavior they meant to deter when minor disrespectful comments were punished by suspensions. Unlike parents, schools have a limited range of adjustments they can make. They can change a student's schedule, try in-school remedies, agreements and suspensions. Or, they can threaten and follow through on a Becca petition. They could also rethink how they apply their power. Suspension policies yield the immediate result of externalizing trouble, but at a district or even societal level they avoid providing the web of care that allows a student to handling the challenges he or she faces.

Adults do not have total power over youth, who need to find places and methods of practicing self-determination without suffering premature and undue harm. Youth agency will express itself regardless of theories about adult coercion. Therefore, it is important to consider how youth and adults interact, rather than back away from the effort or attempt to oversee all the detail of young people's lives. Winnicott's ideas on good management around youth support the need for good intergenerational relations, and not relegating youth

to their own peer groups as the main determinant of their social world.

Intergenerational relations

For schools, attention to student-adult relationships means acknowledging and embracing a shift in the power relations that are entwined with provision. Holding discussions among peers, or providing fast and on-site consequences mean renegotiating the boundaries of control. If teachers, administration and staff are there to control students, then they desire to have the power to do so. If, on the other hand, everyone is there to learn, then disciplinary procedures become more about coaching and facilitating students in self-regulation, a change that could be unsettling, at the very least. Yet some schools do pay attention to these things. One truancy facilitator mentioned an elementary school where, a month after school started, teachers were asked to list all the students they knew by name. The list was compared to enrollment, and those not listed (the invisible children), were assigned to teachers, administrators or staff so each adult could get to know the child. This is only one effort in an elementary school, which is smaller and more personal than middle or high schools, but enacting the policy of knowing all the students is one way that schools could create more personal connections within the school.

Youth need adults, but not in the sense of being vessels to be filled by adult wisdom, or molded from helpless and incompetent beings into whatever adults want. They need adults who care about them. Bronfenbrenner (Brendtro, 2006) said that every child needed at least one adult who was " irrationally crazy about the kid," ready to defend and assist the child. That sentiment could be applied to education: every student needs at least one teacher who will take an active interest in him or her as a person. That interest is not a one-way communication, it relies on youth response for its meaning.

Nogeura (2007, p. 210) said it is a false assumption that adults must "do" everything to make school better, and he asked youth directly for their opinions on how to improve their school environment. Comments from those in this study with experience in schools that had peer councils and youth input indicated that they preferred that environment to one with passive or disengaged students.

Youth workers especially indicated that youth want relationships respecting they are in the moment, with faith for their future.

The idea that youth rights consist of the right to make decisions free of adult influence implies that they exist apart from adults, when they do not. It implies that adult decisions are not also bound up with the broader community, when they are. Lund (2007) proposed that youth autonomy does not mean solitary decision-making, that information webs and support networks such as family, school, peer groups, church, and interest groups influence youth choices. For instance, one student found meaning in a difficult period of her life through her Christian summer camp experience. Others participated in sports through and outside of school. Social networks also affected student options. One student attended alternative school because his brother's actions put him (and those around him) at risk for violence. It was not the best or even a good placement for his needs, yet others' actions had affected his education. One mother said that her son was recovering from several years of drugs use and school absence. He deliberately aligned with two peer groups when he returned to school — one for sports and one for academics — to make sure he wanted to be there.

In all those places, youth formed relations outside the family, some of them with adults. Youth desire responsible parents who will give them more attention (Böök & Perälä-Littunen, 2008), but good relations with other adults are important, too. The comment from a youth worker that even one good relation with one adult at school can make a difference for student engagement indicates how crucial those relations are. During the photography class, one incident stood out among the many times that students went to teachers for advice, or help, or to talk. One student, a solemn and unengaged young man, found an umbrella in the classroom. He was fooling around with it, opening and closing it, pretending to hit things with it, and a teacher came and took it away from him. She teased him, saying "I ought to take this umbrella and smack you with it." This sounds bad, but she was joking, and as she turned away, his face lit up with a rare smile. The alternative school environment had room for this exchange, as it had room for a student to bring her sister's baby in the morning, to provide mental health breaks, food, and bus tokens.

Purdy (1992) argued that it is possible to know something about others' interests, otherwise the entire medical field would fail to alleviate suffering. Similarly, some adults can envision youth interests. Adults with good knowledge of particular youth can advocate or help them advocate. Students mentioned the support that mothers and grandparents provided for their efforts to stay in school. One reported her mother had expected her child to try skipping class at least once, and reserved serious consequences for any second attempt, knowing that the threat was enough. Another talked about how the teachers at one of the schools were "square," but that he knew they had students' best interests at heart.

Parents and other adults described a model for success that incorporated each youth's unique position and took their agency into account. This appears to agree with the model of youth rights as an extension of rights granted to autonomous rational beings, but the study found limits to that point of view. The ultimate decisions about what to do, or where to go, were an internal process unique to each person. However, those decisions were not choices between an unlimited set of possibilities. In this study, student power was not exercised in a multitude of ways, but in patterns that agree with other studies of truancy: skipping school, drug and alcohol abuse, gang involvement, running away and criminal activity. Later, some students in the study decided to attend or return to school, go to work, more or less follow their parent's rules or negotiate with their parents once they had a path of their choosing. Their use of power in the present shifted once they had a clear idea, for themselves, of their future goals, and that shift did not occur without adult support and encouragement. Expecting youth to be solely self-directed without adult feedback or opinion leaves them in the position of figuring out a complex world without any reference to others who also occupy that world.

Rights under the autonomous rational individual model

With autonomy comes responsibility, but if we hold children responsible for outcomes that they cannot know about - due to inexperience - that is as much a violation of rights as treating them as incompetent. While liberationists say that the ability to make choices rises in tandem with the ability to choose wisely (i.e.

for long-term good), and that youth can see the connection between action and consequence (Purdy, 1992), the experiences of these truant youth argue with those beliefs.

Proponents of youth rights say that the emphasis on youth potential erases appreciation of their abilities and status as people in the present. For instance, John (2003) faulted the psychiatry field for assuming that everything has causal and historical roots, ignoring the ways that immediate, direct experience is disconnected from the past. Some question any validity of the idea of becoming (Horton & Kraftl, 2005). Underlying this is the idea that an appreciation and respect for being, in and of itself, will take care of the future.

That a focus on the here and now may be well-suited to the present-orientation of children and youth, but it also reflects the Western model of individuality with its emphasis on competition, individualism and self-reliance. And, while child-centered theory promotes ideas of self-sufficiency for youth, a larger question is whether saying that they can act on their own implies that they must. Sanger and Willemsen (1991) studied the results of emancipation law for minors in California. They found that parents encouraged youth to leave home to avoid expending money or other resources on them. Emancipated youth found life "precarious and lonely" (p. 297), not unlike youth who are emancipated out of the foster care system. In contrast, the parents who stopped trying to manage their children still provided food, shelter and space for them to figure out what they were going to do. They did not expect their children to become self-sufficient right away, unlike parents who kick or otherwise goad their children out of the house.

Emancipation is an extreme application of endorsing youth independence. Generally, viewing youth as capable of self-sufficiency acts as a remedy for the overly socialized child, whose uniqueness is overlooked in the push to "mold" an appropriate social adult. But neither extreme can claim to model all young people, or encapsulate any young person's existence. Some youth are more socially minded, others less so. Desire for and ability to practice independence vary daily. Certainly, among the youth in this study, some were keenly attuned to their peer group at school and others did not care. Some focused only on friends with the same desires for misbehavior, others had enabling connections

to their families and communities. A few had gang contacts of some kind, some were in and out of their houses just as they were in and out of school, and others wanted nothing more than to stay at home and be left alone.

As independent people, students exercised their agency in ways that appeared to solve problems in the moment, but they were drawing from a limited arsenal of responses. Lack of an approachable adult scaffolding in school, at home or in the community meant their transition to adulthood took some painful detours. Under a system that conceives of power as a joint exercise, with joint rights that could be negotiated rather than contested, the odds are higher that they could have found other solutions, to avoid becoming "bad" students. That label paradoxically both empowers them as rational beings while simultaneously disempowering them in the direction of adulthood. It conflates their being and becoming, using their potential future misbehavior as a reason for adults to disavow their power and responsibility towards youth.

Chapter VI - Conclusions

This study echoes many who have made similar recommendations for many years. The specific improvements that schools could make are not especially new. Instead, schools need to reconceptualize their roles. Students cannot consider school a privilege when the environment is hostile. While school *is* a legal obligation, coercing students back to untenable situations rather than changing those situations is counterproductive. Viewing school as a right opens the door to move away from authoritarian control structures towards more authoritative interactions between students and adults.

The messages that came through the interviews and data analysis are list below.

Improve Measurement

The study has shown how general and chronic truancy and petition filings vary at the school level, even within districts. Yet the data problems that limited this research support calls for improving truancy reporting. Without adequate measurement, there is no reliable way to know the extent of the problem, the relationship between occasional truancy and chronic absenteeism, or whether anti-truancy efforts are effective. Rates based on counts of truant students better reflect truancy's extent in any given school than rates of absences. Attention to data validity is paramount, with timely follow up on suspect numbers so that data are not lost over time. While no school intentionally reports bad data, the truancy reporting requirement for Washington schools is one of a plethora of numbers that each district must track. It is unreasonable not to expect typos and errors. What is unreasonable is to let those errors stand when further communication could clarify the numbers. One step would be to revise the form used so that it indicates a breakdown of students, with totals that must agree. For instance, confusion over whether students with unexcused absences included chronically truant students or not was apparent from the data. A simple change

that required all categories to sum to a total number of students with unexcused absences would make analysis more precise.

There are areas of inquiry that the data could not answer. Student mobility has been shown to be a factor in truancy (Harding & Burley, 1998), and some indication of student turnover would assist determining the extent of the impact that school changes have on student engagement. Unlike absence data, there is no breakdown of students with unexcused absences by race/ethnicity or free and reduced meal status (the only poverty indicator available from schools for their student populations).

Because the Becca petition requirement for filing is 10 or more absences, there is no way to determine those students who have larger numbers of absences. Studies of the effects of the Becca bill after the petition is filed use the only data available, the number of students with 10 or more absences. But an indication of how many students have 20, 40, 60 etc., or more (or some other grouping beyond 10) could assist evaluating petition effectiveness.

The Becca law requires schools to report absences and file truancy petitions, but there is no consequence for them if they allow certain students to age out of the system or transfer others to alternative settings while filing on a few. These actions may make sense in any given case. However, measuring the gap between chronic truants and number of truancy petitions is another way to assess how schools are performing their share of the responsibility for addressing truancy. Does the gap exist because anti-truancy efforts are succeeding, so that only a small number of students require a petition? Does the gap exist because the school delays filing as long as possible and tries to get the student situated somewhere else? Better measurement and a way to consider school's accountability are necessary for a more complete picture of how effective Becca petitions are at stemming truancy.

Most schools in the study did not have high levels of chronic truancy, others did. Truancy is the "canary" for schools as much as it is for students. The many suggestions from students, parents and other concerned adults mirror much other research, and do not bear repeating here. More important is to use high truancy rates as a flag for schools to begin testing and implementing those suggestions, which center on creating a welcoming school climate. The models

using OSPI data indicated that certain factors commonly cited as correlates for truancy are not as important as school environment. Any tendency in truancy studies to foreground poverty levels, race/ethnicity mixes or factors outside student control should be resisted, and the analysis supplemented with other measures.

Revise Becca

When youth can get away with skipping school for extended periods of time, they have less reason to take education seriously, thinking "if they don't care, why should I." When students spend their entire high school career enmeshed in petitions and contempt motions due to the slowness of the courts, their opportunity to learn accountability is lost. Worse, they are being trained to disregard the law. A faster connection between action and consequence is necessary. While a certain amount of time is required for due process and to avoid hasty actions, the Becca process errs far more in being sluggish.

Programs and efforts devoted to preventing truancy and promoting early reengagement would reduce the number of truancy petitions, freeing up courts. Yet even if absences get reported promptly, once youth are engaged in juvenile court they are driven by adult convenience and scheduling. While more juvenile courts and staff devoted to Becca petitions could help, the dockets would likely fill up as quickly as they do now. Expanding school authority with youth participation in mock courts, or policies designed with student input is an approach that could help. But ultimately, schools and courts need to collaborate and rethink the process, taking adolescents' time sense into account, without abrogating rights to representation.

For truancy, all courts should consider engaging social services, as some districts and counties do. It is a mistake to see adults institutions as united "against" youth. Adults within each institution disagree, and they can be at odds with each other. Knowledge is siloed in each, although some counties and districts have begun making their resources for youth available to each other. Requiring communication and coordination between the two institutions would make addressing youth needs easier.

Punishment alone is a continuation of authoritarian power relations, but social services alone bypass the rights of representation that the court requires. Court alone can fail to address real and pressing youth needs, and services alone have no bite. Without either, chronic truants are left to their own recognizance, which means most are left to suffer the long-term consequences of their lack of education.

Given the rights to refusal in Washington, youth are less in danger of being objects of treatment than at risk for never having their needs addressed. As it stands, rights of refusal for those 13 and older trump concerns by parents and other adults because these rights were envisioned as rights to self-determination under the autonomy model. However, they could be re-envisioned under a joint model of protection rights that allows both youth and adults to access services. Parents who see signs of drug abuse, mental illness, learning disabilities or other health concerns could then also have rights to exercise responsibility towards their children by accessing medical and/or mental health care for them. Rather than making this access adversarial, it could be available for those who want it, or see the need for using the services.

Promote School Engagement

Schools need teachers with good interpersonal and management skills, who can see beyond "bad" behavior and de-escalate conflict. While many schools had only 1 or 2 teachers who could benefit from sensitivity training, those few teachers have an oversized influence on the multiple students they are interact with each day. Many resources exist for training classroom management techniques, so failing to use them and allowing teachers with difficulties in this area to continue teaching fails both teachers and students. Therefore, retraining and/or eliminating teachers who do not have students' interests at heart can prevent or delay school disengagement.

Students, parents and youth workers want what happens at school to be handled at school. They criticized schools for using suspension as a disciplinary tactic for minor infractions and felt it contributed to detaching students from their schools. Students, if asked, want material and school-based consequences (Noguera, 2007). Predictive modeling using the survey results indicated that less

punitive treatment for truants resulted in higher attendance. Policies that make it easy to recover from absences can stem the snowball effects of missing school. It may be that schools must live with a low level of general truancy to avoid provoking higher levels through punitive and exclusionary policies.

Deliberately Manage Relationships

The interviews reinforced that one of the key components to long-term student engagement is having good relationships with adults at school. This implies that schools must take some responsibility for creating and maintaining those relationships. Regardless of size, schools must make concerted efforts to make sure that all students are known by at least one adult who is interested in him or her as a person, not only academically.

Personal circumstances impinge on many students' academic focus, and it is in a school's best interest to find a way to acknowledge and assist those students. Every student deserves to be known as a person. This is a tall order for schools in their current state, yet the large and impersonal high schools in many districts are precisely where most school disengagement becomes apparent. It would be easier to implement policies aimed at knowing all the students in smaller schools, but the effort needs to be deliberate in any school.

Schools must reconceptualize parents' role. The research showed specific issues such as lack of notification, ignorance of the law, dismissing parent knowledge and opinion, and the difficulties parents faced with school-parent communications. Parents' challenges in this area indicate two areas for change. First, while smaller schools' effects on academic achievement are debatable (Noguera, 2004; Pilkington & Piersel, 1991), a smaller school makes it easier for adults and students to develop the personal relations necessary to engage students. Parents in the study all regretted not being able to create the relationships with high school teachers and other staff that were possible at the elementary and middle school levels. The logistics of parent outreach that are daunting for a school with 2,000+ students are manageable at smaller sizes.

Parents also cared about being notified of student absences. Personal notification is best, as it guarantees that the parent is aware of their child's truancy and creates personal interactions between parents and school personnel.

While personal notification for every absence is all but impossible for larger schools, the interviews indicated that impersonal systems such as automatic phone calls or online tracking were not especially effective. Youth delete messages, and computerized systems are only as good as their ease of use and ability to be updated. Social service workers raised the question of whether the notification aspect of the system is designed to follow the form of the law but not its intent. This seems an unfair accusation because schools are doing more than they did 15 years ago, but that is the wrong comparison.

The question is how to make notification efforts effective. Schools complain that parents do not respond, or keep contact information up to date. In a business, if parents were viewed as clients, the onus would be on the business to develop ways to stay in touch. Because of confusion over whether school is a right, an obligation or a privilege, most schools have yet to rethink who owns which piece of responsibility for parent-school communications.

A minimum level of absences that trigger personal notification could remedy the difficulties of trying to follow up personally for every absence. Many students skip class occasionally, but do not develop a chronic pattern of absences. If personal notification occurred after 2 or 3 absences then the habit would stand a better chance of being interrupted. One disclosure from the survey was how few schools (15%) used email to notify parents of absences. Whether this reflects lack of adequate administrative computer systems in schools or lack of internet access for communities is not known.

Reframe School As A Right Under A Joint Model Of Rights

The trope of "being/becoming" is a tool for unpacking the ways that adults corner youth and run roughshod over their rights to exist in the moment. A problem with this pairing is that it implies static dichotomies: adulthood vs. childhood; now vs. later; adults as finished products and youth as somehow more valuable by not having "become." It ignores how youth transition to adulthood is a process, and that becoming an adult is a practice. It implies that being an adult is a static state, when any retiree can discuss the changes in body, mind, emotions and spirit that accompany aging. The dichotomy is also a disguise for deeper issues. In the moment, youth have rights to protection and

provision. School and education are providers of those rights, disregarded when they tolerate bullying, externalize “problem” youth or fail to provide a safe and welcoming environment. If youth are not solicited to exercise their rights to participation and power in the school environment, many choose to exercise those rights through their absences.

We can certainly study the ways in which “deviant” behavior makes sense for the person in the moment (Henderson, 2008; Ungar, 2002). On the other hand, assuming that understanding any one young person’s behavior in the moment will attend to their becoming is an oversimplification. There is potential for harm on either side. There is harm from expecting adult behavior from non-adults, conflating being and becoming. Punishing youth when they have difficulty focusing on academics in the face of life events is more harmful than helping them find a way to work through their reactions. There is also harm in focusing solely on the moment, ignoring the likely consequences of actions, as when adults condone drug abuse, or fail to address chronic truancy.

With education being a legal obligation for youth, there is no legitimate way for them to refuse school, regardless of the many who do. Considering education as right, then one line of reasoning is that any right “to” something must contain the right of refusal (Lund, 2007). This leaves rights to education in a precarious position, if rights are construed under an individual autonomy model. Students who find the classroom unacceptable or who find other avenues more compelling would then be within their rights to refuse school. Yet if education is considered a right, as one aspect of the “human moral circle" (Wall, 2008, p. 538) where everyone is owed responsibility from and owes responsibility to others, then the question becomes how to best fulfill those rights. Schools have the obligation to reach out to students and parents. They can promote youth rights to participation by including student opinion in questions of discipline. They can expand their ability to provide an education to include instruction in handling the challenges life has in the present, rather than ignore them in favor of advice for the future. They can create an environment of good management around their students. In that environment, they can provide opportunities for young people to practice and learn their power.

Further Research Directions

The limitations of this research project suggested a number of others:

First, several adults felt that delaying middle school from starting in 5th grade to beginning in 6th grade affects student identity, self-assurance and future school attachment. Comparing districts with different grade patterns in their schools, measuring cohort attendance and graduation rates could explore this question further.

Second, the reasons behind the geographic variation deserve more study. Are differences between the RUCA areas, especially the higher number of students with general and chronic truancy in "Urban Other" areas, due to variations between school cultures, the way that schools integrate within the community, or other reasons? Lower chronic truancy in rural school districts could be related to smaller schools, or more cohesive communities where people know each other, or fewer interesting places to go when skipping school.

Between-school mobility was not part of this study. Schools tend to apply the geographic fix to misbehaving students by sending them home on suspension, or to alternative schools for behavior modification. While a few students preferred the alternative setting, the effect of multiple school changes deserves further study. Does school attachment dwindle as students are transferred to multiple sites? Or, does a successful alternative school experience foster future regular school attachment? On one hand, alternative schools are a place for students who do not fit well in the regular school model. On the other, their purposes vary. Some are specifically designed around particular programs, with waiting lists for enrollment. Others are designed to retrain students to acceptable classroom behavior with the goal returning them to regular school. Still others serve student populations who are not welcome in regular school or not interested in returning. This last type of school can act as a stopping point between chronic truancy and dropping out altogether, yet suffers from the problem of peer influenced truancy. Although regular schools report being under-staffed to handle their truant students, alternative schools are even less supported in that effort. Personnel in the alternative sites and social workers, too,

reported that as the school year progresses, alternative schools handle more students, making tracking and follow-up difficult.

A district-wide study that used periodic enrollment as a base for calculations, rather than the October student count, would test the theory that schools wait until after October to transfer the "bad kids." Some interviewees felt the practice was something of a shell game, as schools obtain funding based on enrollment so that regular schools appear to have higher numbers of students in October when alternative school counts are lower. By May, alternative schools counts have increased as the regular schools send them students who have not fit in well. But whether this perception is matched by attendance and transfer histories is not known.

A detailed study of parent notification patterns for student absences could assist in pinpointing places where the system fails, why students go missing for long periods. Examining what happens in these cases would prove useful for improving parent-school communications.

Finally, in all the concerns over power and rights, parents have been something of a cipher. More exploration of how power between parents and adolescents is shared, used and abused, especially in youth who are committing status offenses, could illuminate the limits of power or clarify responsibilities between adults and youth.

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Appendix 1 – State Law on Truancy

Source: http://www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/Truancy/default.aspx

State Law on Truancy

Washington state's truancy law, known as the Becca Bill, requires the school/district and the juvenile court to take specific actions when youth are truant.

School/District Requirements

After **one** unexcused absence in a month, the school is required to inform the parent in writing or by phone.
After **two** unexcused absences, the school is required to initiate a parent conference to improve the student's attendance.
After **five** unexcused absences in a month, the parent and school must enter a contract to improve the student's attendance. Or, the case can be referred to a Community Truancy Board.
After **seven** unexcused absences in a month, or ten unexcused absences in an academic year, the school district may file truancy petitions with the juvenile court.
If the student is not in compliance with a court order resulting from a tuition petition, the school is required to file a contempt motion.

School districts, through their elected school boards, typically adopt policies and procedures relative to these requirements that are coordinated with local juvenile courts. Guidelines for school board policies are developed through the Washington State School Director's Association, wherein each board makes adjustments to these guidelines based on local priorities and resources.

Each of Washington's school districts addresses the definition of unexcused absences and interventions in a manner consistent with school board policies. Similarly, local juvenile courts address the petition process in a manner consistent with local county juvenile justice priorities and resources. As a result of these local variations, there are significant differences in how each community approaches and resolves the issue of truancy in Washington state.

Juvenile Court Requirements

- Process petitions filed by school districts.
- Schedule hearings alleging truancy, and notify parents and student of the hearing, their

options and rights, and may require their attendance.

- Grant petitions and assume jurisdiction for any period of time deemed necessary if the facts (by a preponderance of evidence) support the petition.
- Schedule hearings alleging non-compliance with court orders, requiring access to legal representation for the student. Parents may also request legal representation.

- The court may order attendance at current school, alternative school, another public school, a skill center, drop-out prevention program, a private school or education center, referral to a Community Truancy Board, or completion of a drug assessment test. The court may order a student to report to county detention, impose alternatives to detention, or order parents to perform community service or pay a fine of up to $25 per day for each unexcused absence, if the court rules that a student or parent violated the court order.

State Laws on Truancy

- RCW 28A.225 Compulsory school attendance and admission
- RCW 28A.225.010 Attendance Mandatory – Age – Exceptions
- RCW 28A.225.020 School's duties upon child's failure to attend
- RCW 28A.225.030 Petition to juvenile court for violations by a parent or child
- RCW 28A.225.090 Court orders – Penalties – Parents' defense

Appendix 2 – Human Subjects Materials

Response Form Conditional Approval
Version 2.1

Human Subjects Division, Box 355752
3935 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105
Phone: 206-543-0098
Fax: 206-543-9218

For HSD Office Use Only **Date Received:**

[ ] Master Copy [✓] Approved [ ] IRB Working Copy [ ] Conditional Approval [✓] Researcher Copy [ ] Noted [ ] Full IRB Review Required [ ] Denied [✓] Expedited Review **Date of IRB Action:** 5/22/08

DORA MOD #

IRB Chair or Designee Signature Sondor
Printed Name Sarah Tudor
Notes

Research Study Information

IRB Application Number	33647	IRB Review Date	April 29th, 2008
IRB Application Title	Early Adolescent Truancy in Washington State: Youth, Space and the Becca Bill		
IRB Application Type	[ ] New Application [ ] Modification [X] Status Report [ ] Other: FORMTEXT		
Lead Researcher Name	Elise Bowditch	Contact Name	Elise Bowditch
Department/Division	Dept. Of Geography	Department/Division	Dept. Of Geography
Phone	206 351-3219	Phone	206 351-3219
Box #	353550	Box #	353550
Email	bowdie@u.washington.edu	Email	bowdie@u.washington.edu

Lead Researcher Signature	Elise Bowditch
Lead Researcher Printed Name and Date Signed *NOTE: Signature must be in ink.*	ELISE BOWDITCH 5/19/08

Purpose Use this form to respond to an IRB review letter when your application has received **Conditional Approval**.

Instructions.

Response Form **Conditional Approval**
Version 2.2

W UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON
Human Subjects Division, Box 359470
Seattle, WA 98195-9470
Phone: 206-543-0098
Fax: 206-543-9218

For HSD Office Use Only | **Date Received:**

[ ] Master Copy	[✓] Approved	Human Subjects Division JUN 1 2009 UW
[ ] IRB Working Copy	[ ] Conditional Approval	
[✓] Researcher Copy	[ ] Approval in Principle	
[ ] Full IRB Review Required	[ ] Denied	
[✓] Expedited Review	[ ] Withdrawn	DORA MOD #

Date of IRB action: 6/4/09	Printed name: [illegible]
IRB Chair or Designee Signature: [signature]	
Notes:	

Research Study Information

IRB Application Number: *(This is five digits "12345")*	33647	**IRB Committee:**	J
IRB Application Title:	Early Adolescent Truancy in Washington State: Youth, Space and the Becca Bill		
IRB Application Type:	[ ] New Application [x] Modification [ ] Status Report [ ] Other:		
IRB Review Date:	May 12, 2009		
Contact Name:	Elise Bowditch		
Lead Researcher Name:	Elise Bowditch	**Date signed:**	6-1-2009
Lead Researcher Signature:	[signature] *Lead Researcher's signature cannot be delegated and must be in ink.*		

Purpose: *Use this form to respond to an IRB review letter when your application has received* ***Conditional Approval***.
Instructions:

1. *Complete the first page of this form.*
2. *Please mark responses below in between the brackets* **[ ] / [X]**, *as appropriate.*
3. ***Open the IRB review letter in an electronic format, and then write your answers to IRB questions directly under each question.***
4. ***Print out the IRB review letter with your answers.***
5. ***Attach those pages to this form.***
6. *Complete supplemental form(s), if applicable to your research.*
7. *Complete the index of attachments.*
8. *Collate all attachments so that you have three complete "application packets."*
9. *Use clips, not staples, on at least one submission, so that the IRB staff may easily distribute your materials to additional IRB reviewers, as needed.*
10. *The Lead Researcher (Principal Investigator) signs Page 1 in ink.*
11. *Submit the signed original and two copies.*

If the instructions above are not followed as stated, the Human Subjects Division will not review your form.

Seattle Public Schools Approval

July 24, 2008

Elise Bowditch
Smith Hall 408
Seattle, WA 98195

Re: Approval of Research Project UWA061608

Dear Elise:

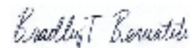
Thank you for submitting your research proposal to Seattle Public Schools. Your proposal was reviewed and approved by our legal and research evaluation teams.

If your research involves the participation of staff and students, you will need permission from the principal of each school you wish to include. Enclosed is a letter indicating central approval of your research, which you may find useful as you seek support. Once principals have agreed to participate, they must sign the enclosed letter of cooperation. It is your responsibility to return this letter to us before you begin your research.

Please note that in return for granting you access to our schools for your study, we expect to receive a copy of your results and final analysis.

Thank you for your interest in Seattle Public Schools. Best of luck with your research. If you have any questions, please contact me at 206.252.0844.

Sincerely,



Brad Bernatek
Director of Education Technology; Research, Evaluation & Assessment (SISO)

RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND ASSESSMENT | Mail Stop – 32-159 ✱ PO Box 34165 ✱ Seattle, WA 98124-1165
Tel: 206.252.0844 ✱ Fax: 206.252.0141 ✱ www.seattleschools.org

Letter of Content

This letter is to verify that The Right Brain Center for the Arts plans on working together with Elise Bosditch on the Digital Photography program for Interagency Schools. The Program Director, Catie Zarski has met and discussed with Elise about the program and is very excited about participating in this project. The Right Brain understands that Elise will be providing the disposable cameras and cover the cost of development. The Right Brain will provide a photography instructor to teach the students how to take photographs and use the digital photography software. Both The Right Brain and Elise have agreed that classes will start in October of 2008. The program will run for 8 to 16 weeks (32 hours) depending on schedule availability at the schools. Right Brain will hold classes at two Interagency Sites. The Right Brain looks forward to working with Elise and Interagency Schools on this project.

Sincerely,

Catie Zarski
Program Driector
catie@therightbrain.org
(206) 384-7181

Take a class – be in a study – earn up to $45 in gift cards

Sign up for a class with RightBrain.org and you can also be part of a University of Washington study that wants to know more about being in school or skipping school and about important places in teenagers' lives.

What you get from the class:

- instruction from professional photographers through RightBrain.org
- learn digital photography software
- create portfolio pieces suitable for shows

What you get if you participate in the study:

- receive up to $45 in gift cards for participating

What we expect from you if you participate in the study:

- be interviewed twice about
    - how school and other places are important in your life
    - what does and doesn't work in schools
    - skipping school
    - what works outside of school in places you like to hang around
    - your understanding of the Becca Bill
- take pictures of places that are important to you and be willing to discuss them

Important! Parent/Guardian permission is required for the class and the study!
Please have your parent or guardian fill out the attached permission slips.

Return it to ______________________ by _________________________ to sign up for this class and/or be in the study. Thanks. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Elise Bowditch, Dept. of Geography, University of Washington at bowdie@u.washington.edu or (206) 351-3219.

Parents/Guardians

If you have teen-agers between 13-16, we invite you to be in a study on truancy and receive a $40 gift card for your time.

Be a part of a University of Washington study that wants to know more about parents' opinions on truancy. We are interested in how parents interact with schools when/if their children skip school. We're interested in what parents know about the Becca Bill and what they think about the Becca process for handling truancy. We would like to interview you about your experiences. **All information will be kept confidential.** The interview would take approximately 1 hour and you would be reimbursed for your time with a gift card of $40. The interview is voluntary, and you could stop at any time. If you would like to participate, please call (206) 351-3219 between 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Please feel free to take one of the information cards below that provides our contact number and a brief description of the project.

Thank You.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact Elise Bowditch, Dept. of Geography, University of Washington at bowdie@u.washington.edu or (206) 351-3219.

RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS FOR PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

{variable portions of the script are noted by these brackets}

Letter/Email Script

My name is Elise Bowditch. I'm from the Department of Geography at the University of Washington. I found your name {website, reference}. I am part of a research study headed by Prof. Suzanne Davies Withers. We are conducting research on early adolescent school absenteeism and the portion of the Becca Bill related to truancy. I am interested in early adolescent experience and use of space in relation to school, and how school and state policies affect youth re-engagement in education. For this study, I would like to interview you for your insight into middle school and early high school chronic absenteeism. {insert something about why their particular input is important – this will vary based on person's position}. The interview will last approximately 1/2 – 1 hour, and is confidential and voluntary. I hope you would be willing to contribute to this study. If you are interested in participating, or would like more information about the study, please contact me at bowdie@u.washington.edu or 206-351-3219 (cell).

Phone Script (this is a general outline, since it will be a conversation, I will allow room for deviation where appropriate, but will insure that they understand participation is **voluntary** and **confidential**).

Good {morning, afternoon}. My name is Elise Bowditch. I'm from the Department of Geography at the University of Washington. {where I know their name from (website, reference)}. I am part of a research study headed by Prof. Suzanne Davies Withers. We are conducting research on early adolescent school absenteeism and the portion of the Becca Bill related to truancy. I am interested in early adolescent experience and use of space in relation to school, and how school and state policies affect youth re-engagement in education. I would like to interview you. {insert something about why their particular input is important – this may vary based on person's position}. I think your insight into middle school and early high school chronic absenteeism would be important for this study. The interview will last approximately 1/2 – 1 hour, and is confidential and voluntary. Would you be willing to contribute?

If Yes: {set appointment date, time, place; request email or phone so that we can communicate in the event of a change}
Thank you for your time and for speaking with me, I look forward to our interview.

If No: {thank them for their time and ask if they know of someone more appropriate to contact}

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Students

In a semi-structured format, I want to ask students about the following areas:

Their experience in more "traditional" middle and high schools

Did they go to a more structured school prior to Interagency Academy?

What did they like about that experience? What didn't they like?

Their experience in Interagency Academy

How long have they been attending Interagency Academy?

What do they like about this experience? What don't they like?

How does their experience here compare with the place(s) they went to school before Interagency Academy?

Their experiences with absenteeism

Did they ever have a time when it was really difficult to attend school?

What was happening around that time? Did they ever cut class or skip school?

What happened when they went absent, in terms of consequences, from their parents or at the school?

When they didn't go to school, where did they go? What did they do there?

How did those places compare with school?

What could they do there that they couldn't do at school?

Their knowledge of the Becca Bill

Do they know about the Becca Bill?

Were they ever involved in Becca policies to address their cutting school?

What happened in that process? What do they think or feel about that process?

Parents

In a semi-structured format, I want to ask parents about the following areas:

Their experience as parents with middle and high schools, whether more "traditional" or with Interagency Academy

What has your experience been like as a parent once your child entered middle school? What were the differences between having a child in elementary school and having a child in middle school? Did you notice changes in how the school handled any challenges? Were there any differences in your relations with the school (the teachers, say, or the principal)?

(If their child is past 8th grade) What were the difference between having a child in middle school and having a child in high school? Did you notice any changes in how the school handled challenges? Were there any differences in your relations with the school (the teachers, say, or the principal)?

Their experiences with their children's absenteeism

Did they ever have a time when it was really difficult for your child to attend school?

What was happening around that time? Did they ever cut class or skip school?

What happened when they went absent, in terms of consequences, from the school?

When your child didn't go to school, where did he or she go?

Did you do anything to try to get your child to go to school more often? How did that work?

Their knowledge of the Becca Bill

What do you know about the Becca Bill?

Were you ever involved in Becca policies to address a child's truancy?

What happened in that process? What do you think or feel about that process?

Teachers, principals

In a semi-structured format, I want to ask school personnel about the following areas:

Their experience in education/general background

How long have they worked here? Have they worked in more "traditional" schools?

In terms of absenteeism, how does their experience in these schools compare?

Their experiences with student absenteeism

What are their observations of or experience with chronic student absenteeism? How does it impact the classroom, the school?

What do they think about the role that parents play? The school? The community?

Their knowledge of the Becca Bill

What do they know about the Becca Bill regarding truancy? What is their perception of its efficacy in addressing chronic truancy?

Community workers

In a semi-structured format, I want to ask community workers about the following areas:

Their agency, their role and its relation to the Becca Bill

What is their title, their job duties? How do these relate to the Becca Bill, especially the truancy portion of the Becca Bill?

What do they feel the law addresses especially well? What areas could use work?

What do they think about the role that parents play? The school? The community?

Student Interview Assent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Student Assent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research for the Early Adolescent Truancy Study

Researchers:

Suzanne Davies Withers
Associate Professor
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 616-9064

email: swithers@u.washington.edu
website: http://faculty.washington.edu/swithers

Elise Bowditch
Graduate Student
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 351-3219
Fax: (206) 543-3313
email: bowdie@u.washington.edu
Please note that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by e-mail.

Researchers' statement

We are asking you to be in a research study. We want to make sure you know enough to decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You can ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose this research is to investigate three things. The first is how your experience of school contributes or contributed to cutting classes or skipping school and how school compare with other places you might go instead. We are interested in what makes some schools a good place or a bad place to be. The second is to talk about the Becca Bill and the laws around attending school. The third is to give you a chance to learn photography and digital media skills and a chance to share your photography and insights with others.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, then you will also be attending photography classes given by RightBrain.org. You do not have to agree to the study to attend the photography classes. First, you will learn about how to take good photographs from professional photographers that work with RightBrain. Sometime in the first half of the classes, I will ask to interview you. We will do the interview in school, but privately. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking about times when it was hard for you to go to school, consequences from your parents or the school if you cut classes, or your personal experience with Becca Bill for truancy. I will record our conversation, transcribe the recording and give you a copy of the transcription. You can edit this and ask that parts be left out. No one but you, me, and my supervisor will see the transcripts. The files will be kept on a secure computer and I will erase the digital recording after the transcribing is done and you have approved it. You will receive a $10 gift card for participating in the first interview.

Student Interview Assent Form

After the first part of the class (photography skills), we will give you disposable cameras so that you can go out and take your own photographs. You will not be supervised for this. You will have 1-2 weeks to take photographs of places that are important to you. We will go over the purpose of the photographs in class before we hand out the cameras. When you bring the camera(s) back, you will receive a $15 gift card. We will develop the photos and store the images on a CD. You will see your photos first, before the researchers, so you can delete any that you don't want to share with the study. When you are ready, we will hold a final interview to talk about the photos you want to include in the study. For this last interview you will receive a $20 gift card.

Finally, we want to put a show together of the pictures you and your classmates selected and worked on in class. This show could be at your school, or out in the community. We will work together as a group to define the show.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The interview has the possibility of being stressful or uncomfortable. You have the right to stop the interview at any time and to refuse to answer questions that you don't want to answer.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The benefit of the study is to understand more about how schools, law, parents and students interact with the Becca Bill. This could help schools improve their techniques for handling chronic school absenteeism.

The personal benefits to participation are small. You might find it beneficial to have a way to give information that would otherwise not have an audience.

OTHER INFORMATION

All of the information that you provide will be confidential. The only limit on confidentiality is if you indicate that there is an indication of child abuse or risk of immediate harm to others, in which case I must, by law, report the information to the authorities. If there is indication of immediate harm to yourself (suicide threat, for instance) then I will discuss this with concerned adults (parents, teachers) and offer you referrals for help. Until the study is over, the computer files of our interviews will be kept on a secure computer. You will have a chance to review the transcripts and delete any or all of it before we add it to the study. Transcripts will be edited and may be excerpted for publication. You will not be identified in any reports using information obtained from the interview. Government or university staff sometimes review studies like this to make sure we are doing the study safely and legally. In that case, the reviewers may see your records, but they are also bound by confidentiality. My supervisor and I, or study reviewers, will be the only ones able to see the links. When the study is complete, in June, 2010, any information that links your identity to a particular transcript will be destroyed.

You can refuse to participate or can withdraw from the study at any time but remain in the photography class.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent ______________________Signature Date_________________

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject ________________ Signature of subject ________________________Date _____________

Copies to: Researcher ______ Student _____

Parent Permission Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Please read this form carefully. It contains three items for you to consider: [1] permission for your child to participate in a photography class given by RightBrain.org at the Interagency Academy, [2] permission for your child to participate in a research study (see attached consent form) and [3] an invitation for you to participate in the research study.

Please complete and send this first page to school with your child if you give permission for your child to participate in the RightBrain.org Photography Class and/or if you are interested in the participating in the research study.

If you give permission for your child to participate in the research study, please sign the attached consent forms and send one copy to school with your child. IMPORTANT: **Keep one copy of the attached consent form for your records.** It is your documentation and if you have any questions in the future, you can use it to reach the researchers or the UW Human Subjects Division.

[1] Permission for the RightBrain.org Photography Class at Interagency Academy

I, ___________________________, parent/guardian, give my permission for my son/daughter _________________ to attend the photography class given by RightBrain.org Photography Class at Interagency Academy. I understand that classes will be held at the school, but assignments will require homework to be completed off-campus. Disposable cameras will be provided so that student can take pictures of places that are important to them. The class is a chance for your child to learn photography and digital media skills and share their photography and insights with others.

[3] PARENT PARTICIPATION INVITATION
Parent Participation in the UW Research Study

We are also interested in how parents interact with schools when/if their children skip school. We're interested in what parents know about the Becca Bill and what they think about schools and the Becca process for school absenteeism. We would like to interview you about your experiences. The interview would take approximately 1 hour and you would be reimbursed for your time with a gift card of $40. The interview is voluntary, and you could stop at any time. If you are interested in participating, please fill in the following information and return this to school:

___ Yes I am interested in participating.

_____I will call you to set up an interview time.

_____The best way to contact me is by phone________ or ___________ and the best time is _________.

I would like a gift card from: __ QFC __ Safeway __ Fred Meyers __ Other___________________

___ No, I am not interested.

Parent Permission Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Research Study: Early Adolescent Truancy and the Becca Bill

Researchers:

Suzanne Davies Withers
Associate Professor
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 616-9064

email: swithers@u.washington.edu
website: http://faculty.washington.edu/swithers

Elise Bowditch
Graduate Student
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 351-3219
Fax: (206) 543-3313
email: bowdie@u.washington.edu
Please note that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by e-mail.

Researchers' statement
We are asking you to allow your child to be in a research study. We want to make sure you know enough to decide whether to permit this study or not. Please read the form carefully. This form explains the purpose of the research, what we would ask you child to do, the possible risks and benefits, and your child's rights as a volunteer. If anything about the research or this form is not clear, If this form is not clear to you, you can ask questions by calling (206) 351-3219. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to allow your child to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent."

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose this research is to investigate how your child's experience of school contributes or contributed to cutting classes or skipping school and how school compare with other places your child might go instead. We are interested in what makes some schools a good place or a bad place to be. We also want to talk about the Becca Bill and the laws around attending school.

STUDY PROCEDURES
If you allow your child to be in the study, then I will interview them at some time during the first half of the classes. This interview will be held in the school, but privately. I will record the conversation, transcribe the recording and give your child a copy of the transcription. Your child can edit this and ask that parts be left out. No one but your child, me, and my supervisor will see the transcripts. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking about times when it was hard for your child to go to school, consequences from parents or the school, or their personal experience with Becca Bill for truancy. The files will be kept on a secure computer and I will erase the digital recording after the transcribing is done and your child has approved it. Each student will receive a $10 gift card for participating in the first interview.

After the first part of the class (photography skills), we will give students disposable cameras so that they can go out and photographs. They will not be supervised for this. They will have 1-2 weeks to take photographs of places that are important to them. We will go over the purpose of the photographs and review safety issues in class before we hand out the cameras. When they bring the camera(s) back, they will receive a $15 gift card. We will develop the photos and store the images on a CD. They will see the photos first, before the researchers, and can delete any that they don't want

to share with the study. When they are ready, we will hold a final interview to talk about the photos they want to include in the study. For this last interview they will receive a $20 gift card.

Finally, we want to put a show together of the pictures that were selected and worked on in class. This show could be at the school, or out in the community. We will work together as a group to define the show.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The interview has the possibility of being stressful or uncomfortable. Your child has the right to stop the interview at any time and to refuse to answer questions that they don't want to answer.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Potential benefit to your child is that this is a chance for them to give their opinion in a way that is confidential yet can reach a larger audience. The benefit of the study is to improve what schools can do to be better places for teenagers and reduce school absences.

OTHER INFORMATION

What they say in the interviews will be confidential. Until the study is over, the computer files of our interviews will be kept on a secure computer with an identifier. Once the study is completed, the links will be removed. My supervisor and I, or study reviewers, will be the only ones able to see the links. Government or university staff may review this study to make sure we are doing the study safely and legally. In that case, the reviewers may see their records, but they are also bound by confidentiality.

The only limit on confidentiality is if your child indicates that there is an indication of child abuse or risk of immediate harm to others, in which case I must, by law, report the information to the authorities. If there is indication of immediate harm to themselves (suicide, for instance) then I will discuss this with concerned adults (parents, teachers) and offer referrals for help.

Your child can refuse to participate or can withdraw from the study at any time without this affecting his or her participation in photography class.

______________________	______________________	__________
Printed Name of Researcher	Signature of Researcher	Date

SUBJECTS STATEMENT

[2] Consent for Student Participation in Interview Research for the Early Adolescent Truancy Study

PLEASE READ THE ATTACHED CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING

I, ___________________________, parent/guardian, give my permission for my son/daughter ________________ to particpate in the University of Washington research study on early truancy and the Becca Bill. This study has been explained to me and I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions about my child's rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will keep a copy of this consent form.

____ No, I do not give permission for my son/daughter _____________ to participate in the research study.

____________________________	____________
Parent Signature	Date

Parent Interview Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Parent CONSENT FORM

Consent for Participation in Interview Research for the Early Adolescent Truancy Study

Researchers:

Suzanne Davies Withers
Associate Professor
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 616-9064

email: swithers@u.washington.edu
website: http://faculty.washington.edu/swithers

Elise Bowditch
Graduate Student
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University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 351-3219
Fax: (206) 543-3313
email: bowdie@u.washington.edu
Please note that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by e-mail.

Researchers' statement

We are asking you to be in a research study. We want to make sure you know enough to decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You can ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose this research is to investigate your experience as a parent with what happens when youth skip school, or have many unexcused absences. We are interested in your experience as a parent as it applies to dealing with children's absenteeism and the schools. We are also interested in your experience and opinions of those parts of the Becca Bill that relate to truancy. Our interviews with you are part of a larger study investigating the interaction of truancy and the Becca Bill.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The study procedure will consist of an interview that will take approximately 1 hour. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking about difficulties your child may have in attending school, your relations with school officials, and your tactics for getting your child to go to school.

You may refuse to answer any question in the interview, or end the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. The recordings will be copied to a secure computer and erased from the recorder within 24 hours of the interview. The copied recording will be kept for 8 weeks. I will transcribe the interview then erase the recording. The connection between the transcript and your identity will be kept confidential. You will have a chance to review the transcriptions and delete any or all of it before we add it to the study. The recordings will be shared only

between the investigators on the study. Transcripts will be edited and may be excerpted for publication. You will not be identified in any reports using information obtained from the interview. All transcripts and data will be kept confidential and when the study is complete (in June, 2010), any information that links your identity to a particular transcript will be destroyed.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The interview has the possibility of being stressful or uncomfortable. You have the right to stop the interview at any time and to refuse to answer questions that you don't want to answer.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The benefit of the study is to understand more about how schools, law, parents and students interact with the Becca Bill. This could help schools improve their techniques for handling chronic school absenteeism.

The personal benefits to participation are small. You might find it beneficial to have a way to give information that would otherwise not have an audience.

OTHER INFORMATION

What you say in the interviews will be confidential. Until the study is over, the computer files of our interviews will be kept on a secure computer with your identifier. Once the study is completed, the links will be removed. My supervisor and I, or study reviewers, will be the only ones able to see the links. Government or university staff may review this study to make sure we are doing the study safely and legally. In that case, the reviewers may see your records, but they are also bound by confidentiality.

The only limit on confidentiality is if you indicate that there is an indication of child abuse or risk of immediate harm to others, in which case I must, by law, report the information to the authorities. If there is indication of immediate harm to yourself (suicide threat, for instance) then I will discuss this with concerned parties (other household adults for instance) and offer referrals for help.

You can refuse to participate or can withdraw from the study at any time without this affecting your child's participation in photography class.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent ______________________Signature Date_________________

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject ________________ Signature of subject ________________________Date _____________

Copies to: Researcher _______ Subject _____

Parent Interview Consent Form B

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Parent CONSENT FORM B

Consent for Participation in Interview Research for the Early Adolescent Truancy Study

Researchers:

Suzanne Davies Withers
Associate Professor
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 616-9064

email: swithers@u.washington.edu
website: http://faculty.washington.edu/swithers

Elise Bowditch
Graduate Student
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 351-3219
Fax: (206) 543-3313
email: bowdie@u.washington.edu
Please note that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by e-mail.

Researchers' statement

We are asking you to be in a research study. We want to make sure you know enough to decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You can ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose this research is to investigate your experience as a parent with what happens when youth skip school, or have many unexcused absences. We are interested in your experience as a parent as it applies to dealing with children's absenteeism and the schools. We are also interested in your experience and opinions of those parts of the Becca Bill that relate to truancy. Our interviews with you are part of a larger study investigating the interaction of truancy and the Becca Bill.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The study procedure will consist of an interview that will take approximately 1 hour. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking about difficulties your child may have in attending school, your relations with school officials, and your tactics for getting your child to go to school.

You may refuse to answer any question in the interview, or end the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. The recordings will be copied to a secure computer and erased from the recorder within 24 hours of the interview. The copied recording will be kept for 8 weeks. I will transcribe the interview then erase the recording. The connection between the transcript and your identity will be kept confidential. You will have a chance to review the transcriptions and delete any or all of it before we add it to the study. The recordings will be shared only

between the investigators on the study. Transcripts will be edited and may be excerpted for publication. You will not be identified in any reports using information obtained from the interview. All transcripts and data will be kept confidential and when the study is complete (in June, 2010), any information that links your identity to a particular transcript will be destroyed.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

The interview has the possibility of being stressful or uncomfortable. You have the right to stop the interview at any time and to refuse to answer questions that you don't want to answer.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The benefit of the study is to understand more about how schools, law, parents and students interact with the Becca Bill. This could help schools improve their techniques for handling chronic school absenteeism.

The personal benefits to participation are small. You might find it beneficial to have a way to give information that would otherwise not have an audience.

OTHER INFORMATION

What you say in the interviews will be confidential. Until the study is over, the computer files of our interviews will be kept on a secure computer with your identifier. Once the study is completed, the links will be removed. My supervisor and I, or study reviewers, will be the only ones able to see the links. Government or university staff may review this study to make sure we are doing the study safely and legally. In that case, the reviewers may see your records, but they are also bound by confidentiality.

The only limit on confidentiality is if you indicate that there is an indication of child abuse or risk of immediate harm to others, in which case I must, by law, report the information to the authorities. If there is indication of immediate harm to yourself (suicide threat, for instance) then I will discuss this with concerned parties (other household adults for instance) and offer referrals for help.

You can refuse to participate or can withdraw from the study at any time.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent ______________________Signature Date_________________

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject ________________ Signature of subject ________________________Date _____________

Copies to: Researcher ______ Subject _____

Community Professional Interview Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Community Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research for the Early Adolescent Truancy Study
Researchers:

Suzanne Davies Withers
Associate Professor
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 616-9064

email: swithers@u.washington.edu
website: http://faculty.washington.edu/swithers

Elise Bowditch
Graduate Student
Department of Geography
University of Washington
Box 353550
Seattle, Washington 98195-3550
Telephone: (206) 351-3219
Fax: (206) 543-3313
email: bowdie@u.washington.edu
Please note that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information sent by e-mail.

RESEARCHERS' STATEMENT

We are asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to investigate your experience as a professional working with middle and early high school truancy, and the application of the truancy portion of the Becca Bill.

STUDY PROCEDURES

The study procedure will consist of an interview that will take approximately 1 hour. In the interview, we will be asking questions about your interaction with the truancy portion of the Becca Bill and with the problems of school absenteeism in general. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking your opinion the role that parents, schools and community officials play in handling truancy, or asking about areas of the law that could be improved. You may refuse to answer any question in the interview, or end the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded. The tapes will be kept for 8 weeks, transcribed by the interviewer with a coded identifier and then erased. The connection between the transcript and your identity will be kept confidential. You will have a chance to review the transcriptions and delete any or all of it before we add it to the study. The recordings will be shared only between the investigators on the study. Transcripts will be edited and may be excerpted for publication. You will not be identified in any reports using information obtained from the interview. All transcripts and data will be kept confidential and when the study is complete, in June, 2010, any information that links your identity to a particular transcript will be destroyed.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Community Professional Interview Consent Form

The interview has the possibility of being stressful or uncomfortable. We will be talking about subjects that may be distressing to you personally. You might experience conflict between your personal and professional opinions. Examples of potentially sensitive questions include asking your opinion the role that parents, schools and community officials play in handling truancy, or asking about areas of the law that could be improved.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The benefit of the study is to understand more about how schools, law, parents and students interact with the Becca Bill. This could help schools improve their techniques for handling chronic school absenteeism.

The personal benefits to participation are small. You might find it beneficial to have a way to give information that would otherwise not have an audience.

OTHER INFORMATION

As mentioned earlier, tape recordings will be erased within eight weeks of the interview. Links between the data and the identified person will be kept confidential until June, 2010, at which time they will be destroyed. Only the investigators on the project will have access to the linking information, with one exception. The only limit on confidentiality is if you indicate that there is an indication of child abuse or risk of immediate harm to others, in which case I must, by law, report the information to the authorities. If there is indication of immediate harm to yourself (suicide threat, for instance) then I will discuss this with concerned parties (a friend, for instance) and offer referrals for help.

Although we will make every effort to keep your information confidential, no system for protecting your confidentiality can be completely secure. It is possible that unauthorized persons might discover that you are in this study, or might obtain information about you. Government or university staff sometimes reviews studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. If the results of this study are published or presented, we will not use your name unless you have given us permission to do so.

Printed name of study staff obtaining consent ________________________ Signature Date ___________________

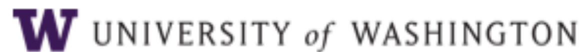
SUBJECT'S STATEMENT

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Printed name of subject _____________________________

Signature of subject _______________________________ Date ________________________

Copies to: Researcher ___ Subject ___



Elise Bowditch
University of Washington, Dept. of Geography
Seattle, WA 98195

[Date]

[Principal]
[School]
[Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Principal],

In the next 5-10 days you will receive an email requesting your participation in a survey. This survey is part of a research project that asks about school environment, truancy and the Becca law. This survey is part of my doctoral research. The goal is to analyze the variations in school environments, truancy and use of the Becca law in Washington at the school level.

The survey takes approximately **15 minutes** to complete. The email will have the subject line **"Survey on Truancy and the School Environment in Washington State".** It will contain a link to an online survey site and a code for you to enter that is used to track responders and remove them from the reminder list. I will send an initial message and three reminder emails. The validity of the results depend on obtaining a high response rate.

Your responses are confidential. The online survey provider, Catalyst, is pre-approved by our Human Subjects Department for its reliability and security. Responses will be aggregated for analysis and publication. Results will be available in 2010.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the person(s) below:

Elise Bowditch, PhC.
University of Washington
Department of Geography
Box 353550 / Smith Hall 408
Seattle, WA 98195
206 351-3219
bowdie@u.washington.edu

Suzanne Davies Withers, Associate Professor
University of Washington
Department of Geography
Box 353550 / Smith Hall 408
Seattle, WA 98195
206 616-9064
swithers@u.washington.edu

Sincerely,

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Washington's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact our Human Subjects Department at (206) 543-0098 or hsdinfo@washington.edu.

Email reminders for Survey

Dear Principal,

As mentioned in my letter mailed to you July 31st, this message is to ask you to participate in a survey on school environments. This survey is part of my doctoral research project at the University of Washington. My goal is to analyze variations in school environments and use of the Becca law across the state at the school level.

Please use the link provided below to begin the survey. There are 70 questions, most are simple and answering them should take around 15 minutes. When you confirm your answers, your name will be removed from our follow-up list.

Being in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. All information is confidential, and the online survey system, Catalyst, is secure. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me by email or at the number below. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact our Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or at hsdinfo@washington.edu.

Everyone – school personnel, parents, law and justice employees, social workers - wants to reduce truancy. Keeping kids in school reduces their involvement with the juvenile justice system. Most importantly, increased attendance means an increased chance for success in adulthood. I need your input to understand the variation in use of the Becca Laws around the State, and how school environments might play a role in reducing truancy. I sincerely hope that you choose to participate in the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elise Bowditch

Ph.C.
UW Dept. of Geography
Box 353550, Smith 408
Seattle, WA 98195
bowdie@u.washington.edu

Reminder #2

Dear Principal,

About a week or so ago you were invited to participate in a research project by answering a short (15-minute) online survey about your school. I am hoping that you can find those 15 minutes to complete the survey. As mentioned in my initial letter, this is the first of three reminder email messages I'm sending to urge you to complete the survey. I will use the information to analyze variations in school environments and use of the Becca law across the state at the school level. People I've interviewed in the course of doing this research – school personnel, parents, law and justice employees, social workers – stress the importance of reducing truancy as a way of increasing graduation.

Please use the link provided to begin the survey. When you confirm your answers, your name will be removed from our follow-up list.

Being in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. All information is confidential, and the online survey system, Catalyst, is secure. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me by email or at the number below. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact our Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or at hsdinfo@washington.edu.

Your input is valuable for understanding the variation in use of the Becca Laws around the State, and in the role school environment can play in reducing truancy. I sincerely hope that you choose to participate in the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elise Bowditch

Ph.C.
UW Dept. of Geography
Box 353550, Smith 408
Seattle, WA 98195
bowdie@u.washington.edu

Reminder #3

Dear Principal,

Several weeks ago you were invited to participate in a research project by answering a short (15-minute) online survey about your school. I am hoping that you can find that 15 minutes to complete the survey. As mentioned in my initial letter, this is the second of three reminder email messages I'm sending to urge you to complete the survey. I will use the information to analyze variations in school environments and use of the Becca law across the state at the school level. People I've interviewed in the course of doing this research – school personnel, parents, social workers, law and justice employees - want to reduce truancy.

Please use the link provided to begin the survey. When you confirm your answers, your name will be removed from our follow-up list.

Being in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. All information is confidential, and the online survey system, Catalyst, is secure. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me by email or at the number below. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact our Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or at hsdinfo@washington.edu.

Your input is critical for understanding the variation in use of the Becca Laws around the State, and in the role school environment can play in reducing truancy. Small or big, urban or rural, all schools are important. I sincerely hope that you choose to participate in the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elise Bowditch

Ph.C.
UW Dept. of Geography
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Seattle, WA 98195
bowdie@u.washington.edu

Reminder #4

Dear Principal,

Several weeks ago you were invited to participate in a research project by answering a short (15-minute) online survey about your school. I am hoping that you can find 15 minutes to complete the survey. As mentioned in my initial letter, this is the final reminder you'll receive asking you to complete the survey. Please take the small amount of time asked to complete the survey. Adults who care about students – school personnel, parents, law and justice employees, social workers - want to reduce truancy. Reducing truancy reduces school dropout and adolescent involvement with the juvenile justice system. The most important reason, though, is that reducing truancy means increasing the life chances for the young people involved.

Please use the link provided to begin the survey. When you confirm your answers, your name will be removed from our follow-up list.

Being in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. All information is confidential, and the online survey system, Catalyst, is secure. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me by email or at the number below. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact our Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098 or at hsdinfo@washington.edu.

Small or big, urban or rural, all schools have information that is relevant and useful. I sincerely hope that you choose to participate in the study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Elise Bowditch

Ph.C.
UW Dept. of Geography
Box 353550, Smith 408
Seattle, WA 98195
bowdie@u.washington.edu

This is only a preview of the survey. Responses will not be saved. Close

Survey on Truancy and the School Environment in Washington State

INVESTIGATORS' STATEMENT

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in this study. Please read this form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of this research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to participate in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

This survey is part of a research project on truancy and the Becca bill in Washington State schools. We want to learn more about how school environments and policies intersect with unauthorized absences under Washington's truancy law. The purpose of this research is to examine geographic variation in these matters. We hope to better understand school factors that may inhibit truancy and how schools' use of Becca varies. You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, we would like you to fill out the survey about your school environment. These questions are informed by interviews with parents, students, teachers and professionals in the community who are involved with Becca and truancy. The survey will take about 15 minutes. The questions ask about general physical and population conditions in the school, about items related to school attachment and involvement, about discipline, and about school policies on unauthorized absences and Becca.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

You may have concerns about privacy and confidentiality of your responses. You may dislike a particular question, or find that it is taking longer to complete than our pilot-based estimate indicate.

OTHER INFORMATION

Being in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. You can stop at any time. The survey that you will take is through WebQ on the University of Washington's Catalyst system. WebQ is an anonymous survey system that provides no direct link between your survey and your school. Nobody except the research team and research auditors will have access to the data at any time. Indirect links between your survey responses and your identification code will be kept confidential. Your identification code will not be linked with the survey data during analysis or included in any presentations or publications of our findings. All links between identification codes and survey results will be de-linked by September 2010. We will keep the de-linked survey responses indefinitely.

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research I can contact the investigator listed below. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I can make a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking on the "NEXT" button that will take me to the survey page, I have knowingly consented to taking the survey entitled "Survey on Truancy and the School Environment in Washington State".

Next Cancel

Questions or Comments?
Contact ELISE BOWDITCH at bowdie@u.washington.edu

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research I can contact the investigator listed below. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I can make a copy of this consent form for my records. By clicking on the "Next" button that will take me to the survey page, I knowingly consent to taking the survey titled "Survey on Truancy and School Environment in Washington State".

Physical Environment

Question 1.
In your opinion, are there any aspects of the school's physical condition or attributes that are in critical need of repair, upgrade or significant improvement?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ school grounds
- ☐ roof
- ☐ windows
- ☐ plumbing/bathrooms
- ☐ heating system
- ☐ air conditioning system
- ☐ classroom space
- ☐ lab equipment
- ☐ computers/technology
- ☐ textbooks
- ☐ athletic facilities/equipment
- ☐ arts facilities/equipment

Physical Environment

Question 2.
How many, if any, portables does the school use for extra classroom space?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1-2
- ○ 3-5
- ○ >5

Question 3.
Are there woods, alleys or other secluded areas outside the building, on or near the school?

- ○ Yes

○ No

Physical Environment

Question 4.

Overall, how would you rate the noise level of your school, **during class periods**?

○ Quiet
○ Mild Noise
○ Active & Involved Noise
○ Disruptively Noisy

Question 5.

Overall, how would you rate the noise level of the school **between** class periods?

○ Quiet
○ Mild Noise
○ Active & Involved Noise
○ Disruptively Noisy

Schedule

Question 6.
What is the school's usual starting time?

Question 7.
What is the school's usual ending time?

Schedule

Question 8.
How much time is allowed for classroom changes?

○ 0-5 minutes
○ 5-7 minutes

- 7-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- >15 minutes
- n/a - using clusters or few classroom changes
- elementary school

Question 9.
If this is a middle school, junior high or high school, do you have a homeroom period?

- Yes
- No
- This is an elementary school

Question 10.
If this is an elementary school, how many times in the school day do students have recess (including lunch)?

- not an elementary school
- 1
- 2
- 3

Activities

Question 11.

Please indicate how many sports activities are available at or through the school.
(Count each type of sport, even if only offered in one trimester. Count co-ed sports once for boys, once for girls.)

Rows

Varsity Sports for Boys
Varsity Sports for Girls
Nonvarsity Sports for Boys
Nonvarsity Sports for Girls

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10-15
- >15

not applicable

Activities

Question 12.

Please indicate how many non-academic, non-sports activities are available at or through the school.
(Include groups related to academics, such as Debate Team, Math or Language clubs; the arts, such as Photography or Music Clubs; those related to school, like Honor Society, or Yearbook; Business Clubs like F.B.L.A; and Service Organizations like Key Club, etc.)

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10-15
- >15
- not applicable

Activities

Question 13.

In your best estimation, approximately what proportion of students are engaged in extracurricular activities?

Rows

Clubs, interest groups, etc.
JV/Varsity sports
Non-varsity sports

- 0-15%
- 15-30%
- 30-45%
- 45-60%
- 60-75%
- >75%
- not applicable

Activities

Question 14.

What is the basic activity fee, in dollars?

Question 15.

How many scholarships or waivers of the activity fee are available for students?

Question 16.

If assistance is available, how many of these scholarships or waivers get used?

Coursework/Homework

Question 17.
In a typical week, how much time is a student expected to spend on homework, outside of school?

- ○ 0-5 hours
- ○ 5-10 hours
- ○ 10-15 hours
- ○ 15-20 hours

Question 18.
In your best estimate, what proportion of students experience difficulty keeping up with the class instruction and homework?

- ○ 0-10%
- ○ 10-20%
- ○ 20-40%
- ○ 40-60%
- ○ >60%

Coursework/Homework

Question 19.

What types of assistance does the school offer to students who are experiencing difficulty keeping up with the work?

- ☐ in-school tutoring or homework help
- ☐ after-school tutoring, homework clubs or saturday school
- ☐ online tutoring or homework help
- ☐ other forms of homework help
- ☐ not offered

Coursework/Homework

Question 20.
In your best estimate, what is the participation level in the homework assistance programs offered?

- ○ We have much more need than we can currently meet.
- ○ Need slightly outpaces demand.
- ○ Everyone who needs it gets it
- ○ Participation is good, we reach most of the students who need help
- ○ Participation could be better, but we help those who show up
- ○ We are trying/have tried to increase participation in these programs
- ○ No programs available

Coursework/Homework

Question 21.

Does the school offer any quiet times and places (study hall, library time) for students to make progress on homework?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Question 22.

Are students typically allowed to make up assignments missed due to unauthorized absences?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Coursework/Homework

Question 23.
Many districts or schools have policies about accumulated unexcused absences causing credit loss. In your school, how many unexcused absences trigger credit loss?

- not applicable
- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 15-20
- >20

Counseling/Assistance

Question 24.
How often is there at least one of the following professionals present?

Rows

guidance counselor or graduation specialist
mental health counselor or psychologist
drug and alcohol counselor

- not present
- 1-3 days a month
- 1 day a week
- 2-4 days a week
- 5 days a week

Food

Question 25.
Some schools allow students in certain grades to eat lunch off-campus while some schools do not. Please indicate what your school's rules are on this matter. If the school doesn't serve a particular grade, use "N/A" as the answer.

Rows

up to 6th grade

7th-8th grades
9th grade
10th grade
11th grade
12th grade

- Not allowed
- Allowed as a privilege
- Allowed
- N/A

Food

Question 26.
Of the students allowed to each lunch off-campus, how many do so on a daily basis?

- N/A - not allowed
- 0-20%
- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- 60-80%
- >80%

Food

Question 27.
Are students allowed to have second servings of lunch?

- Yes
- No

Question 28.
Does the school provide breakfast for students?

- Yes
- No

Question 29.
What proportion of the prepared food is unused each day (thrown away, donated, etc.)?

- 0-15%
- 15-30%

- 30-45%
- 45-60%
- >60%

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 30.
How often do parent/guardian volunteers assist maintaining school order (hall monitors or lunchroom monitors, for example)?

- Not applicable
- Never
- Occasionally, but less than monthly
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Daily

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 31.
In your best estimate, what percent of parents participate in these school activities?

Rows

book sales, auctions, or other fund-raising activities
student performances, open houses, or other events such as science fairs
routine parent-teacher conferences
discipline-related parent-teacher conferences

- 0-15%
- 15-30%
- 30-45%
- 45-60%
- 60-80%
- >80%

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 32.
What time of day are parent-school activities typically scheduled?

Rows

fund-raising activities
performances, open houses, fairs
routine parent-teacher conferences
disciplinary parent-teacher conferences

- school hours
- after school
- evenings
- weekends
- flexible
- not applicable

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 33.
How many members does the school's Parent-Teacher Association have?

- no PTA at this school
- 0-20
- 20-50
- 50-100
- 100-150
- >150

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 34.
Please indicate which, if any, special adult-child events (such as a breakfast or luncheon) occur at your school.

- Mother's or Father's event(s)
- similar event(s) but not labelled with "Mother" or "Father"
- Family event(s)
- no events of this nature

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Question 35.

How would you best describe the mix of students in your school, based on family support for education?

- a few supportive / many unsupportive
- a substantial minority supportive / slight majority unsupportive
- a majority supportive / slight majority unsupportive
- mostly supportive / a few unsupportive
- a mix, no clear distinctions.

Discipline

Question 36.
What type of disciplinary actions are used at your school?

- ☐ send student to principal's office
- ☐ in-school suspension or detention
- ☐ after-school detention or Saturday school
- ☐ out-of-school suspensions
- ☐ expulsion
- ☐ Other:

Discipline

Question 37.
What is the minimum out-of-school suspension period, in days?

Question 38.
What is the average length of suspensions, in days?

Discipline

Question 39.
In the last five years, how many students were given out-of-school suspensions for **any** reason ?

Rows

2007-2008
2006-2007
2005-2006
2004-2005
2003-2004

- 0
- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-40
- 40-60
- 60-100
- 100-150
- >150

Discipline

Question 40.
In the last five years, how many students were given out-of-school suspensions for **actual physical violence** or **actual possession of a weapon**?
(Exclude suspensions for threats of violence, pictures of weapons, talk of weapons, etc.)

Rows

2007-2008
2006-2007
2005-2006
2004-2005
2003-2004

- 0
- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-40
- 40-60
- 60-100
- 100-150
- >150

Discipline

Question 41.
During the following years, how many students were given out-of-suspensions for **possession or use of illegal drugs** (including tobacco)?

Rows

2007-2008
2006-2007
2005-2006
2004-2005
2003-2004

- ○ 0
- ○ 1-5
- ○ 5-10
- ○ 10-20
- ○ 20-40
- ○ 40-60
- ○ 60-100
- ○ 100-150
- ○ >150

Safety & Security

Question 42.
Wha does your school use to maintain security?

- ☐ access control (visitor sign in, monitoring doors)
- ☐ metal detectors
- ☐ surveillance cameras
- ☐ fenced property
- ☐ phones in classrooms
- ☐ walkie/talkies for teachers, staff

Safety & Security

Question 43.

How often are security guards, law enforcement or security personnel present at the school?

Rows

Male personnel

Female personnel

- ○ 0
- ○ 1-2
- ○ 3-4
- ○ 5

Safety & Security

Question 44.
How often do any the following occur?

Rows

Classroom disorder

Gang activities

Bullying

Hate activities

Noninjurious fighting among students

Property damage (vandalism, theft)

- ○ daily
- ○ weekly
- ○ monthly
- ○ yearly or less
- ○ never

Teacher Skills

Question 45.
In your opinion, observing teacher-student interactions, are there any teachers at your school who would benefit from sensitivity training regarding remarks made to students about race, ability, appearance or intelligence?

- ○ none
- ○ a couple (1-2)

- a few (3-5)
- some (6-10)
- more than 10

Student Mobility

Question 46.
What is your best estimate of the average number of students who transfer in or out of your school in a month?

- 0-5
- 5-10
- 10-15
- 15-20
- 20-25
- 25-30
- 30-35
- 35-40
- 40-45
- 45-50
- >50

Student Mobility

Question 47.
What seems to be the heaviest time of the school year for transfers in to the school?

- None in particular
- Sept.-Oct.
- Nov.-Dec.
- Jan.-Feb.
- Mar.-Apr.
- May-June

Question 48.
What seems to be the heaviest time of the school year for transfers out of the school?

- None in particular
- Sept.-Oct.
- Nov.-Dec.
- Jan.-Feb.

- Mar.-Apr.
- May-June

Student Mobiity

Question 49.
Do you have any special programs that address entering school for the first time at the start of the school year?

- Yes, at the start of the year
- Yes, at the start of the year with followup later in the year
- No

Question 50.
Do you have any special programs that address new students entering school mid-year?

- Yes, upon entry
- Yes, upon entry with followup later in the year
- No

Unexcused Absences

Question 51.

How late to class does a student have to be for tardiness to count towards an unexcused absence ?

- <5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- >15 minutes
- not applicable

Question 52.

Some schools accumulate some number of tardies to equal one absence. What is your school's policy on this?

- 1-2 tardies = 1 absence
- 3-5 tardies = 1 absence
- 5-7 tardies = 1 absence
- 7-10 tardies = 1 absence
- >10 tardies = 1 absence
- Varies, discretionary

○ We do not have this policy

Unexcused Absences

Question 53.

What is the minimum amount of missed school time that is reported to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction as an unexcused absence?

○ late to class
○ missing class
○ missing partial day of classes
○ missing all day of classes

Unexcused Absences

Question 54.

When does the school first attempt to report unauthorized absences to the parent/guardian of the absent student?

○ Same day
○ Next day
○ 2 or more days after absence

Question 55.
Does the school report unauthorized absences to the parent/guardian of the absent student by personal phone call?

○ Yes
○ No

Unexcused Absences

Question 56.
Does the school report unauthorized absences to the parent/guardian of the absent student by an automated, recorded phone call?

	Logic destinations
○ Yes	➡ Question 57: If yes, what time of day do...
○ No	➡ Question 58: Does the school report main...

No response ➡ Question 58: Does the school report main...

Question 57.
If yes, what time of day does the phone call occur?

- ○ morning
- ○ afternoon (before 6 p.m.)
- ○ evening

Unexcused Absences

Question 58.
Does the school report maintain a website for parents/guardians to check student attendance?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Question 59.
Does the school report unauthorized absences to the parent/guardian of the absent student through email notification?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Unexcused Absences

Question 60.
At any point, does the school report unauthorized absences to the parent/guardian of the absent student by sending a letter to the home?

	Logic destinations
○ Yes	➡ Question 61: If yes, is that letter sent...
○ No	➡ Question 63: In your best estimation, wh...
No response	➡ Question 63: In your best estimation, wh...

Question 61.
If yes, is that letter sent as certified mail?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Question 62.
If yes, are attempts made to personalize the letter or make it stand out in some way (handwritten address, avoiding standard school stationery, colorful envelopes, etc.)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Unexcused Absences

Question 63.
In your best estimation, what percent of parents/guardians respond to the school when first notified of a student's unauthorized absence?

- ○ 0-20%
- ○ 20-40%
- ○ 40-60%
- ○ 60-80%
- ○ >80%

Question 64.
In your best estimation, when you have a student who is approaching the Becca limit (7 absences in a month, 10 in a year), what percent of parents are already involved with the school in attempting to address the student's truancy?

- ○ 0-20%
- ○ 20-40%
- ○ 40-60%
- ○ 60-80%
- ○ >80%

Becca Laws on Truancy

Question 65.
How does your school inform **students** about the Becca law regarding truancy?
(Check all that apply.)

- ☐ presented as part of school assembly
- ☐ through fliers or handouts
- ☐ with in-class presentations
- ☐ on the school website (or through links from website)
- ☐ via e-mail messages

- [ ] some other way
- [ ] not provided

Question 66.
How does your school inform **parents** about the Becca law regarding truancy?
(Check all that apply.)

- [ ] through fliers or handouts
- [ ] via e-mail messages
- [ ] on the school website (or through links from website)
- [ ] presented as part of PTA meetings or other parent-school events
- [ ] some other way
- [ ] not provided

Becca Laws on Truancy

Question 67.
Does your school have access to a community truancy board?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Becca Laws on Truancy

Question 68.
It may not always be practical to file a Becca petition for every chronically truant student. For your school, please indicate how important each of the following reasons are in decisions not to pursue a Becca filing.

Rows

student's attendance improved
student aged out of the system
student transferred to another school
student maintaining grades despite absences
absences are related to illness
difficulty in locating student
difficulty in contacting parents
cost of pursuing the petition

- very important
- important
- somewhat important
- minor
- not applicable

Becca Laws on Truancy

Question 69.
A recent appellate court ruling (the Boruchowitz decision) requires a defense attorney for the first court hearing in truancy filings. How much has this ruling affected pending decisions on whether to file on a student?

- not at all
- somewhat, we may reconsider some cases
- medium effect, we may reconsider many cases
- large effect, we may reconsider most cases
- not aware of ruling

Becca Laws on Truancy

Question 70.

Please indicate if you would like to see the results of the survey when it is completed.

(A list of requests will be kept separate from the survey information. When all responses have been collected, I will send email providing a link to the survey summary statistics.)

- Yes
- No

Appendix 3 – Data Sources

State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.) Demographic Information by School 2003-2004 through 2006-2007 [Excel Files]. Available from Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI] Web site, http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/DataDownload.aspx

State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.) Unexcused Absence Rates 2003-2004 through 2006-2007 [Excel Files]. Available from Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI] Web site, http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/DataDownload.aspx

State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.) School Building [Excel File]. Available from Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI] Web site, http://www.k12.wa.us/dataadmin/

State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.) *Report[s] to the Legislature on Weapons in School* [PDF File]. Available from Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI] Web site, http://www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/Weapons/default.aspx.

State of Washington, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.) School Report Card [Web]. Available from Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI] Web site, http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/.

WWAMI Rural Health Research Center (n.d.) Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes (RUCAs) [Excel file]. Available from WWAMI Rural Health Research Center Web site, http://depts.washington.edu/uwruca/

United States Census Bureau (n.d.) Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data [Data File]. Available from the U. S. Census at http://www.census.gov/govs/school/.

National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) Individually run query for school information [Data file] Available through Common Core of Data Build-A-Table function at http://nces.ed.gov/.

Washington Courts (n.d.) Court Directory: Superior, Juvenile, District & Municipal Courts by County [Data file]. Available at http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir/?fa=court_dir.county.

United States Census Bureau (n.d.) *Census 2000 Summary File 3* [Data File]. Available from the U. S. Census American FactFinder at http://www.census.gov/govs/school/

United States Census Bureau (n.d.) Census 2000 Summary File 3 file from American FactFinder Download Center [Data file]. Available at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DownloadDatasetServlet?_lang=en

United States Census Bureau (n.d.) Census 5-Digit Zip 980-986 SF3 and Census 5-Digit Zip 987-994 SF3, Census B from U. S. Census American FactFinder Detailed Tables [Data file]. Available at

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&_lang=en&_ts=315769206683278

Washington State Center for Court Research (2010) Domestic Violence Orders 2003-2007 from Washington State Center for Court Research [Data file] per special request.

Washington Statistical Analysis Center (2010) Crimes Per 1,000 Population from Washington Statistical Analysis Center's Uniform Crime Report Query [Data file]. Available at **http://wa-state-ofm.us/UniformCrimeReport/**.

Appendix 4 – Supplementary Tables

Table 8b: OSPI TP Special Model Results

TP		District		Regular		Mid-High	
N		6215		5943		2396	
missing		532		233		350	
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.002	****	0.004	****	0.035	****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	1.071		1.060		1.065	
2005-06 (03-04)	1	1.241	****	1.234	****	1.157	*
2006-07 (03-04)	1	1.212	**	1.198	**	1.227	**
% Hisp (white)	1	0.998		0.998		0.993	*
% Black (white)	1	0.980	****	0.980	****	0.984	***
% Other (white)	1	1.013	****	1.014	****	1.004	
% Male	1	1.006		0.989		1.001	
% FRM	1	1.030	****	1.029	****	1.030	****
StdPerTch	1	1.012	*	1.011	*	1.018	***
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.018	*	1.007		1.017	
%TchMD	1	1.000		0.998		1.002	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	2.341	****			2.050	****
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.757	****	1.901	****		
Middle (elem)	1	4.387	****	4.329	****	0.454	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	5.577	****	5.160	****	0.646	****
High (elem)	1	9.598	****	9.598	****		
Comp.	1	5.063	****	3.160	****		
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	1.089		1.087		1.084	
Yth Pov BG		1.000		1.000		1.000	
PubAssist Z		1.002		1.003		0.990	
RntHH Z		1.004	*	1.006	**	1.003	
Yth Unemp Z		1.002		1.000		0.997	
LngIso Z		0.963	****	0.955	****	1.001	
DV/SqMi		0.996		0.995		0.989	**
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1	1.056		1.084		1.028	
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	1.002		1.003		0.997	
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	1.198	*	1.266	**	1.306	**
Other Urban (Urb. Core)	1	1.134		1.165	*	1.164	
Crime/100	1	1.015		1.016	*	1.014	
Dist. Size		0.990		0.993		0.986	*
Yth Prop Sd		0.995		0.996		0.977	*
MCFamPov Z		0.986	****	0.986	****	0.976	****
Yth Pov SD		0.989	*	0.992		0.992	
$perStd (K)	1	0.961	*	0.974		0.975	
WpnsInc	1	0.877		0.852		1.103	
AltSch (none)	1	1.073		1.055		1.247	***
Dist. To Court	1	0.992	**	0.992	**	0.996	
Inf_Intercept		3.257	****	3.310	****	1.898	****
Inf_SUA		0.152	****	0.153	****	0.220	****
Alpha	1	2.700	****	2.545	****	2.487	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 8c: OSPI TP Single Year Model Results

TP		District		2004		2006	
N		6215		1623		1556	
missing		532		101		135	
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.002	****	0.002	****	0.003	****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	1.071					
2005-06 (03-04)	1	1.241	****				
2006-07 (03-04)	1	1.212	**				
% Hisp (white)	1	0.998		0.989	*	0.997	
% Black (white)	1	0.980	****	0.977	****	0.982	**
% Other (white)	1	1.013	****	1.011	**	1.011	**
% Male	1	1.006		0.996		1.012	
% FRM	1	1.030	****	1.035	****	1.028	****
StdPerTch	1	1.012	*	1.022	**	1.013	
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.018	*	1.002		1.028	
%TchMD	1	1.000		0.997		1.002	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	2.341	****	2.044	****	1.880	**
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.757	****	1.697	*	1.435	
Middle (elem)	1	4.387	****	4.611	****	4.337	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	5.577	****	7.245	****	5.064	****
High (elem)	1	9.598	****	10.153	****	9.478	****
Comp.	1	5.063	****	10.266	****	4.682	****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	1.089		1.006		1.186	
Yth Pov BG		1.000		1.001		0.998	
PubAssist Z		1.002		1.012		0.987	
RntHH Z		1.004	*	1.002		1.006	
Yth Unemp Z		1.002		1.005		0.993	
LngIso Z		0.963	****	0.976		0.986	
DV/SqMi		0.996		0.996		1.009	
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1	1.056		0.922		0.919	
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	1.002		1.128		0.903	
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	1.198	*	0.929		1.451	*
Other Urban (Urb. Core)	1	1.134		0.993		1.107	
Crime/100	1	1.015		1.026		0.995	
Dist. Size		0.990		0.987		0.950	****
Yth Prop Sd		0.995		1.014		0.994	
MCFamPov Z		0.986	****	0.983	**	0.984	*
Yth Pov SD		0.989	*	0.987		0.991	
$perStd (K)	1	0.961	*	0.996		0.908	**
WpnsInc	1	0.877		0.765		0.801	
AltSch (none)	1	1.073		1.117		1.013	
Dist. To Court	1	0.992	**	0.992		1.000	
Inf_Intercept		3.257	****	3.145	****	4.534	****
Inf_SUA		0.152	****	0.178	****	0.116	****
Alpha	1	2.700	****	2.304	****	2.764	****

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 9b: OSPI CNF Single Year Model Results

CNF2		**District**		**Regular**		**Mid-High**	
N			6215		5943		2396
missing			532		233		350
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.001	****	0.001	****	0.033	****
2004-05(03-04)	1	0.838	*	0.846	*	0.885	
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.798	**	0.790	**	0.916	
2006-07(03-04)	1	0.797	**	0.745	***	0.941	
% Hisp (white)	1	1.011	**	1.011	**	1.012	**
% Black (white)	1	1.006		1.003		1.001	
% Other (white)	1	1.017	****	1.015	****	1.020	****
% Male	1	1.016	*	1.017		1.010	
% FRM	1	1.026	****	1.025	****	1.028	****
StdPerTch	1	0.999		1.002		1.010	
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.007		0.996		0.997	
%TchMD	1	1.000		1.000		0.999	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	1.900	****			1.648	***
Elem-Mid(elem)	1	1.266		1.347	*		
Middle(elem)	1	3.402	****	3.368	****	0.120	****
Mid-High(elem)	1	10.450	****	9.901	****	0.468	****
High(elem)	1	26.627	****	26.555	****		
Comp.	1	9.503	****	2.844	**		
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.744	****	0.742	****	0.990	
Yth Pov BG		1.002		1.002		0.998	
PubAssist Z	1	1.017		1.032		1.009	
RntHH Z	1	0.998		1.000		0.998	
Yth Unemp Z	1	0.996		0.996		0.996	
LngIso Z	1	0.975	*	0.974	*	0.979	
DV/SqMi	1	1.021	****	1.020	****	1.026	****
Isol.Rur.(Urb.Core)	1	0.493	****	0.470	****	0.540	**
SmallRural(Urb.Core)	1	0.686	*	0.615	**	0.646	*
LargeRural(Urb.Core)	1	0.772	*	0.743	*	0.791	
OtherUrban(Urb.Core)	1	1.179		1.162		0.934	
Crime/100	1	0.989		0.988		0.984	
Dist. Size	1	0.981	**	0.984	*	0.995	
Yth Prop Sd	1	1.025	*	1.026	*	1.025	
MCFamPov Z	1	0.990	*	0.989	**	0.985	**
Yth Pov SD		0.996		0.994		0.982	*
$perStd (K)	1	0.953	*	1.000		0.934	*
WpnsInc	1	1.321	*	1.279	*	1.461	*
AltSch (none)	1	1.070		1.036		1.002	
Dist. To Court		1.001		1.002		1.001	
Alpha		19.243	****	17.127	****	9.038	****

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 9c: OSPI CNF Single Year Model Results

CNF2		District		2004		2006	
N		6215		1623		1556	
missing		532		101		135	
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.001	****	0.003	****	0.000	****
2004-05(03-04)	1	0.838	*				
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.798	**				
2006-07(03-04)	1	0.797	**				
% Hisp (white)	1	1.011	**	1.015	*	1.007	
% Black (white)	1	1.006		1.009		1.004	
% Other (white)	1	1.017	****	1.010		1.017	***
% Male	1	1.016	*	1.029		1.005	
% FRM	1	1.026	****	1.022	****	1.030	****
StdPerTch	1	0.999		0.994		1.016	
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.007		0.988		1.021	
%TchMD	1	1.000		0.999		1.002	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	1.900	****	1.413		1.489	
Elem-Mid(elem)	1	1.266		1.054		1.944	**
Middle(elem)	1	3.402	****	3.294	****	3.773	****
Mid-High(elem)	1	10.450	****	10.325	****	20.839	****
High(elem)	1	26.627	****	23.376	****	39.437	****
Comp.	1	9.503	****	11.970	****	18.573	****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.744	****	0.827		0.766	
Yth Pov BG		1.002		1.004		1.000	
PubAssist Z	1	1.017		1.011		0.970	
RntHH Z	1	0.998		0.998		0.998	
Yth Unemp Z	1	0.996		1.009		0.994	
LngIso Z	1	0.975	*	1.005		0.982	
DV/SqMi	1	1.021	****	1.026	**	1.013	*
Isol.Rur.(Urb.Core)	1	0.493	****	0.426	**	0.799	
SmallRural(Urb.Core)	1	0.686	*	0.718		0.637	
LargeRural(Urb.Core)	1	0.772	*	0.820		0.868	
OtherUrban(Urb.Core)	1	1.179		1.459	*	1.091	
Crime/100	1	0.989		0.953	*	1.050	*
Dist. Size	1	0.981	**	0.972	*	0.994	
Yth Prop Sd	1	1.025	*	1.012		1.021	
MCFamPov Z	1	0.990	*	0.974	**	0.994	
Yth Pov SD		0.996		0.994		0.974	*
$perStd (K)	1	0.953	*	0.908		1.018	
WpnsInc	1	1.321	*	1.272		2.521	***
AltSch (none)	1	1.070		0.819		1.406	**
Dist. To Court		1.001		0.995		1.003	
Alpha		19.243	****	18.602	****	9.181	****

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 12b: OSPI SUA Special Model Results

SUA		District		Reg		MH	
N		6215		5943		2396	
missing		532		233		350	
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(B)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.087	****	0.063	****	0.919	
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.915		0.922		0.911	
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.861	**	0.867	**	0.909	
2006-07 (03-04)	1	0.933		0.928		0.965	
% Hisp (white)	1	1.004		1.003		1.004	
% Black (white)	1	1.011	**	1.010	**	1.004	
% Other (white)	1	1.008	****	1.008	****	1.007	***
% Male	1	1.004		1.008		1.002	
% FRM	1	1.014	****	1.013	****	1.014	****
StdPerTch	1	1.000		1.001		1.004	
AvgYrEdExp	1	0.987		0.987		0.993	
%TchMD	1	0.999		1.000		0.999	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	0.859				0.833	*
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.235	*	1.178			
Middle (elem)	1	2.107	****	2.106	****	0.432	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	3.408	****	3.185	****	0.773	**
High (elem)	1	4.834	****	4.773	****		
Comp.	1	3.006	****	2.388	****		
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.752	****	0.761	****	0.891	*
Yth Pov BG		1.000		1.000		1.000	
PubAssist Z		1.006		1.014		0.997	
RntHH Z		1.000		1.001		0.996	*
Yth Unemp Z		1.002		1.001		1.000	
LngIso Z		0.979	*	0.980	*	1.001	
DV/SqMi		1.004		1.004		1.006	*
Isol. Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.880		0.905		0.856	
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.898		0.892		0.871	
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.948		0.947		1.024	
Other Urban (Urb. Core)	1	1.279	***	1.278	***	1.234	**
Crime/100	1	1.008		1.008		0.999	
Dist. Size		0.988	*	0.989	*	0.997	
Yth Prop Sd		1.010		1.011		0.989	
MCFamPov Z		0.996		0.996		0.993	**
Yth Pov SD		0.998		0.998		0.994	*
$perStd (K)	1	0.975	*	0.981		0.961	**
WpnsInc	1	1.237	*	1.211	*	1.227	*
AltSch (none)	1	1.135	*	1.131	*	1.089	
Alpha	1	7.140	****	6.867	****	2.062	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 12c: OSPI SUA Single Year Model Results

SUA		District		2004		2006	
N		6215			1623		1556
missing		532			101		135
Parameter	DF	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P	exp(b)	P
Intercept	1	0.087	****	0.248	0.092	0.045	***
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.915					
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.861	**				
2006-07 (03-04)	1	0.933					
% Hisp (white)	1	1.004		1.002		1.001	
% Black (white)	1	1.011	**	1.009		1.010	
% Other (white)	1	1.008	****	1.009	*	1.007	
% Male	1	1.004		1.001		0.996	
% FRM	1	1.014	****	1.015	****	1.014	****
StdPerTch	1	1.000		1.001		1.007	
AvgYrEdExp	1	0.987		0.984		0.988	
%TchMD	1	0.999		0.999		1.001	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	0.859		0.842		0.764	
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.235	*	1.109		1.216	
Middle (elem)	1	2.107	****	1.995	****	2.082	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	3.408	****	3.038	****	4.638	****
High (elem)	1	4.834	****	4.669	****	5.188	****
Comp.	1	3.006	****	2.840	****	3.891	****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.752	****	0.812	*	0.823	
Yth Pov BG		1.000		1.000		1.001	
PubAssist Z		1.006		1.005		0.978	
RntHH Z		1.000		0.998		1.001	
Yth Unemp Z		1.002		1.003		1.008	
LngIso Z		0.979	*	0.999		0.977	
DV/SqMi		1.004		1.006		1.003	
Isol. Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.880		0.946		0.902	
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.898		0.887		0.753	
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.948		0.978		0.942	
Other Urban (Urb.Core)	1	1.279	***	1.336	*	1.115	
Crime/100	1	1.008		0.991		1.026	
Dist. Size		0.988	*	0.983		0.991	
Yth Prop Sd		1.010		0.994		1.012	
MCFamPov Z		0.996		0.988	*	1.003	
Yth Pov SD		0.998		0.998		0.989	
$perStd (K)	1	0.975	*	0.953		1.006	
WpnsInc	1	1.237	*	1.389	*	1.565	*
AltSch (none)	1	1.135	*	1.114		1.237	*
Alpha	1	7.140	****	7.103	****	5.808	****

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 13b: OSPI SUA10 Special Model Results

SUA		District		Regular		Mid-High	
N		6215		5943		2396	
missing		532		233		350	
Parameter	DF	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	1	0.002	****	0.002	****	0.073	****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.908		0.917		0.929	
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.938		0.942		1.009	
2006-07 (03-04)	1	0.948		0.909		1.081	
% Hisp (white)	1	1.006	**	1.006	**	1.003	
% Black (white)	1	1.000		0.996		0.996	
% Other (white)	1	1.016	****	1.016	****	1.015	****
% Male	1	1.011		1.006		1.009	
% FRM	1	1.030	****	1.029	****	1.029	****
StdPerTch	1	0.999		1.000		1.010	*
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.009		0.997		1.003	
%TchMD	1	1.000		0.999		0.999	
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	1.663	****			1.469	****
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.676	****	1.782	****	0.186	****
Middle (elem)	1	4.846	****	4.816	****	0.505	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	11.195	****	10.551	****		
High (elem)	1	26.120	****	25.967	****		
Comp.	1	9.393	****	3.702	****		
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.776	****	0.779	****	0.981	
Yth Pov BG		1.001		1.001		0.999	
PubAssist Z	1	1.007		1.020		0.996	
RntHH Z	1	0.999		1.001		1.000	
Yth Unemp Z	1	0.997		0.997		0.999	
LngIso Z	1	0.969	***	0.965	****	0.991	
DV/SqMi	1	1.015	****	1.015	****	1.014	***
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1	0.570	****	0.563	****	0.596	****
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.751	**	0.704	**	0.745	**
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.847	*	0.836	*	0.931	
Other Urban (Urb. Core)	1	1.169	*	1.167	*	1.043	
Crime/100	1	1.006		1.005		1.002	
Dist. Size	1	0.978	****	0.981	***	0.985	*
Yth Prop Sd	1	1.017	*	1.019	*	1.010	
MCFamPov Z	1	0.987	****	0.986	****	0.979	****
Yth Pov SD		0.998		0.997		0.989	*
$perStd (K)	1	0.933	****	0.967	*	0.935	**
WpnsInc	1	1.228	*	1.182	*	1.398	**
AltSch (none)	1	1.093		1.066		1.123	*
Alpha		4.498	****	4.087	****	2.396	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 13c: OSPI SUA10 Single Year Model Results

SUA		**District**		**2004**		**2006**	
N		6215		1623		1556	
missing		532		101		135	
Parameter	DF	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	1	0.002	****	0.006	****	0.001	****
2004-05 (03-04)	1	0.908					
2005-06 (03-04)	1	0.938					
2006-07 (03-04)	1	0.948					
% Hisp (white)	1	1.006	**	1.007		1.001	
% Black (white)	1	1.000		1.000		0.998	****
% Other (white)	1	1.016	****	1.011	**	1.015	
% Male	1	1.011		1.014		1.004	****
% FRM	1	1.030	****	1.028	****	1.035	
StdPerTch	1	0.999		0.994		1.013	
AvgYrEdExp	1	1.009		0.993		1.019	
%TchMD	1	1.000		1.000		1.000	*
Sch Type (Reg.)	1	1.663	****	1.386		1.379	*
Elem-Mid (elem)	1	1.676	****	1.385		2.099	****
Middle (elem)	1	4.846	****	4.624	****	5.418	****
Mid-High (elem)	1	11.195	****	11.305	****	18.045	****
High (elem)	1	26.120	****	23.464	****	34.912	****
Comp.	1	9.393	****	12.248	****	14.659	****
AntiTruEff (Y)	1	0.776	****	0.793	*	0.851	
Yth Pov BG		1.001		1.002		0.999	
PubAssist Z	1	1.007		1.008		0.969	
RntHH Z	1	0.999		1.000		0.999	
Yth Unemp Z	1	0.997		1.008		0.994	
LngIso Z	1	0.969	***	0.992		0.978	
DV/SqMi	1	1.015	****	1.017	**	1.009	*
Isol. Rur. (Urb. Core)	1	0.570	****	0.488	**	0.707	
Small Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.751	**	0.810		0.669	*
Large Rural (Urb. Core)	1	0.847	*	0.786		0.931	
Other Urban (Urb. Core)	1	1.169	*	1.293	*	1.057	
Crime/100	1	1.006		0.977		1.042	**
Dist. Size	1	0.978	****	0.975	*	0.982	*
Yth Prop Sd	1	1.017	*	1.017		1.006	
MCFamPov Z	1	0.987	****	0.971	****	0.993	
Yth Pov SD		0.998		1.000		0.987	
$perStd (K)	1	0.933	****	0.911	**	0.958	
WpnsInc	1	1.228	*	1.113		1.997	****
AltSch (none)	1	1.093		0.936		1.206	*
Alpha		4.498	****	4.466	****	2.812	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 17b: Survey SUA Model Results

SUA	Classes		OSPI	
N / Missing	291 / 63		289 / 65	
(ommitted categories in parentheses)	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	0.188	****	0.185	**
Alternative School (elementary)	2.343	**	2.693	**
Regular Middle-High (elementary)	1.294		1.336	
High Needs Condition (low)	1.350	*	1.229	
Earlier start time (later)	1.022		1.132	
Other activ., less affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	1.121		0.987	
Other activ., more affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	0.903		0.851	
Homework Help - Not Offered (offered)	1.409		1.652	*
Drug & Alc. Counselors 2-5 x week (none)	1.456	*	1.335	
Drug & Alc. Counselors 1-4 x month (none)	1.181		1.146	
Teacher insensitivity - 3 or more (none)	1.454	*	1.319	
Teacher insensitivity - 1 or 2 (none)	1.332	*	1.232	
Transfer Support - No (yes)	0.845		0.875	
Discipline - Few used (many equally)	0.960		0.935	
Disc. - Susp., Det. off/onsite (many equally)	0.811		0.827	
Trouble - Acting up (low)	0.912		0.866	
Trouble - High Conflict (low)	0.978		0.983	
Off campus lunch not allowed (allowed)	0.868		0.945	
Security - high, cameras & staff (low)	1.191		1.059	
Parents Supportive (not)	0.617	*	0.705	
Parents 50/50 support (not)	0.991		0.978	
Min. rpt UA - missing all day (late.class)	0.904		0.835	
Min. rpt UA - missing partial day (late.class)	1.010		0.967	
Policies around UA - Fewer penalties (more)	0.836		0.820	
Parent Notif. of UA - less personal (more)	1.355	*	1.525	**
Infrm Stud. Re Becca Other Ways (not done)	0.883		0.838	
Infrm Stud. re Becca Many Ways (not done)	1.133		1.012	
AntiTruancy Efforts - none (present)			0.915	
RUCA - Other Urban (Urban Core)			1.056	
RUCA - Rural (Urban Core)			0.989	
% Black (white)			1.005	
% Hispanic (white)			1.000	
% Other Race/Ethn. (white)			1.012	
% Free Reduced Meals			1.008	
Spending Per Pupil (in 1000s)			0.951	
Weapons Incidents (per 100s)			1.293	
Alpha	2.360	****	2.261	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 17c: Survey SUA10 Model Results

SUA10	**Classes**		**OSPI**	
N / Missing	291 / 63		289 / 65	
(ommitted categories in parentheses)	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	0.010	****	0.007	****
Alternative School (elementary)	8.367	****	10.457	****
Regular Middle-High (elementary)	1.344		1.409	
High Needs Condition (low)	1.981	****	1.738	****
Earlier start time (later)	1.223		1.395	*
Other activ., less affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	0.966		0.847	
Other activ., more affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	0.879		0.722	
Homework Help - Not Offered (offered)	1.089		1.414	
Drug & Alc. Counselors 2-5 x week (none)	1.720	**	1.539	**
Drug & Alc. Counselors 1-4 x month (none)	1.107		1.124	
Teacher insensitivity - 3 or more (none)	1.972	****	1.871	***
Teacher insensitivity - 1 or 2 (none)	1.460	**	1.414	*
Transfer Support - No (yes)	0.726		0.794	
Discipline - Few used (many equally)	0.662		0.661	
Disc. - Susp., Det. off/onsite (many equally)	0.921		0.882	
Trouble - Acting up (low)	0.988		0.946	
Trouble - High Conflict (low)	0.818		0.799	
Off campus lunch not allowed (allowed)	1.018		1.171	
Security - high, cameras & staff (low)	1.919	****	1.687	****
Parents Supportive (not)	0.557	**	0.658	*
Parents 50/50 support (not)	1.156		1.152	
Min. rpt UA - missing all day (late.class)	1.004		0.868	
Min. rpt UA - missing partial day (late.class)	1.029		0.957	
Policies around UA - Fewer penalties (more)	0.610	****	0.616	****
Parent Notif. of UA - less personal (more)	1.264		1.474	**
Infrm Stud. Re Becca Other Ways (not done)	1.031		0.962	
Infrm Stud. re Becca Many Ways (not done)	1.649	*	1.472	
AntiTruancy Efforts - none (present)			1.054	
RUCA - Other Urban (Urban Core)			0.966	
RUCA - Rural (Urban Core)			0.997	
% Black (white)			1.024	
% Hispanic (white)			0.999	
% Other Race/Ethn. (white)			1.013	
% Free Reduced Meals			1.011	**
Spending Per Pupil (in 1000s)			0.947	
Weapons Incidents (per 100s)			1.242	
Inf_Intercept	16.710	**	16.019	**
Inf_SUA	0.414		0.403	*
_Alpha	1.720	****	1.588	****

**** p <0.0001, *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Table 17d: Survey TP Model Results

TP	**Classes**		**OSPI**	
N	291 / 63		289 / 65	
(ommitted categories in parentheses)	exp(B)	P	exp(B)	P
Intercept	0.003	****	0.001	****
Alternative School (elementary)	11.185	****	10.870	****
Regular Middle-High (elementary)	3.502	****	2.202	**
High Needs Condition (low)	1.395	*	1.432	*
Earlier start time (later)	1.024		1.099	
Other activ., less affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	1.770	*	1.027	
Other activ., more affrdble (afford. Sprts/Act.)	1.477		1.012	
Homework Help - Not Offered (offered)	1.087		1.429	
Drug & Alc. Counselors 2-5 x week (none)	1.508	*	1.533	*
Drug & Alc. Counselors 1-4 x month (none)	1.074		1.069	
Teacher insensitivity - 3 or more (none)	1.732	**	1.381	
Teacher insensitivity - 1 or 2 (none)	1.427	*	1.255	
Transfer Support - No (yes)	0.794		0.901	
Discipline - Few used (many equally)	0.782		0.735	
Disc. - Susp., Det. off/onsite (many equally)	1.185		0.886	
Trouble - Acting up (low)	1.344		1.334	*
Trouble - High Conflict (low)	1.026		1.167	
Off campus lunch not allowed (allowed)	1.348		1.573	**
Security - high, cameras & staff (low)	1.561	**	1.510	**
Parents Supportive (not)	0.851		0.971	
Parents 50/50 support (not)	0.993		0.855	
Min. rpt UA - missing all day (late.class)	0.860		0.927	
Min. rpt UA - missing partial day (late.class)	0.881		1.019	
Policies around UA - Fewer penalties (more)	0.858		0.958	
Parent Notif. of UA - less personal (more)	1.042		1.256	
Infrm Stud. Re Becca Other Ways (not done)	0.656		0.783	
Infrm Stud. re Becca Many Ways (not done)	0.975		1.200	
AntiTruancy Efforts - none (present)			0.911	
RUCA - Other Urban (Urban Core)			1.064	
RUCA - Rural (Urban Core)			1.243	
% Black (white)			0.993	
% Hispanic (white)			0.980	****
% Other Race/Ethn. (white)			0.989	
% Free Reduced Meals			1.026	****
Spending Per Pupil (in 1000s)			1.069	
Weapons Incidents (per 100s)			2.037	
Inf_Intercept	2.748	**	2.537	*
Inf_SUA	0.134	****	0.121	***
_Alpha	1.811	****	1.550	****

**** $p < 0.0001$, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 23 Survey Frequencies, Part I

Frequencies	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
School Type				
Alternative	29	8.19	31.0	8.74
Elementary	170	48.02	115.7	32.69
Middle-High	155	43.79	207.3	58.56
Condition				
High need	72	20.3	71.9	20.31
Low need	282	79.7	282.1	79.69
Late Start				
No	194	55.0	223.0	63.14
Yes	159	45.0	130.2	36.86
missing	1		0.8	
Late Start by School Type				
Alternative	9	31.0	11.1	35.84
Elementary	124	73.4	87.9	76.5
Middle-High	26	16.8	31.1	15.02
Missing			0.8	
HomeRoom				
No	285	80.5	264.5	74.71
Yes	69	19.5	89.5	25.29
HomeRoom by School Type (where=Yes)				
Alternative	14	48.3	16.4	53.13
Elementary	4	2.4	2.1	1.78
Middle-High	51	32.9	71.0	34.27
Sports/Activities				
Affordable/aided sports & activities	188	53.1	218.3	61.67
Other activities, more affordable	62	17.5	48.6	13.71
Other activities, less affordable	104	29.4	87.1	24.61
Homework Help				
mosty not offered	29	8.2	23.5	6.65
mostly offered, on site	325	91.8	330.5	93.35
Drug & Alcohol Counselors				
None	199	58.4	170.7	49.5
1-4 x month	71	20.8	79.3	22.99
2-5 x week	71	20.8	94.8	27.51
missing	13		9.2	
Teacher Insensitivity				
none	114	32.4	105.0	29.8
1-2	175	49.7	179.9	51.03
3 or more	63	17.9	67.6	19.17
missing	2		1.5	

Table 23 Survey Frequencies, Part II

Frequencies	**Unweighted**		**Weighted**	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Transfer Support				
No	78	22.1	63.8	18.08
Yes	275	77.9	289.2	81.92
missing			0.9	
Discipline				
Suspension, Detention off/onsite	125	35.3	96.6	27.29
Many forms, none predominant	201	56.8	233.8	66.04
Few used	28	7.9	23.6	6.67
Trouble				
Low occurance	140	39.7	146.4	41.44
Acting up	152	43.1	138.3	39.16
High Conflict	61	17.3	68.5	19.4
missing	1			
Off campus lunch				
Allowed	281	88.1	42.4	13.47
Not Allowed	38	11.9	272.3	86.53
missing	35		39.4	
Security				
high, cameras & staff	130	36.7	160.8	45.43
low	224	63.3	193.2	54.57
Has PTA				
No	102	28.9	106.0	30.09
Yes	251	71.1	246.2	69.91
missing	1		1.9	
Family Events				
No	125	35.8	147.0	42.08
Yes	224	64.2	202.3	57.92
missing			4.7	
Any Parent/Guardian-Child Event				
No	90	25.8	239.0	68.42
Yes	259	74.2	110.3	31.58
missing			4.7	
Parent support				
Not supportive	39	11.1	37.8	10.71
50/50	36	10.2	42.7	12.08
Supportive	278	78.8	272.8	77.22
missing	1		0.8	

Table 23 Survey Frequencies, Part III

Frequencies	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Reasons for not filing				
Attendance Improvement				
n/a	33	9.7	29.1	8.55
not important	53	15.5	52.0	15.24
important	256	74.9	259.9	76.21
missing	12		13.0	
Aging Out of School				
n/a	151	44.8	131.8	39.19
not important	48	14.2	49.4	14.69
important	138	41.0	155.2	46.12
missing	17		17.6	
Transfer to other school				
n/a	48	14.2	42.6	12.56
not important	146	43.3	149.5	44.12
important	143	42.4	146.9	43.32
missing	17		15.0	
Grades Improved				
n/a	65	19.3	57.3	16.92
not important	201	59.6	206.2	60.84
important	71	21.1	75.4	22.24
missing	17		15.0	
Illnes				
n/a	25	7.3	22.3	6.53
not important	58	17.0	58.9	17.25
important	258	75.7	260.2	76.22
missing	13		12.7	
Student Hard to Locate				
n/a	92	27.3	80.4	23.83
not important	156	46.3	157.4	46.65
important	89	26.4	99.6	29.51
missing	17		16.6	
Parent Hard to Locate				
n/a	66	19.4	64.1	18.79
not important	192	56.5	189.1	55.46
important	82	24.1	87.8	25.75
missing	14		13.1	
Cost				
n/a	134	39.5	139.3	40.94
not important	177	52.2	169.0	49.67
important	28	8.3	31.9	9.39
missing	15		13.8	

Table 23 Survey Frequencies, Part IV

Frequencies	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Minimum UA reported to OSPI				
missing / late class	89	26.3	98.9	29.23
missing partial day	138	40.7	134.6	39.76
missing all day	112	33.0	104.9	31.00
missing	15		15.6	
Policies around unexcused absences				
More penalties	100	28.3	111.8	31.59
Fewer Penalties	254	71.8	242.2	68.41
Parent Notification of unexcused absences				
less personal	124	35.0	162.5	45.9
more personal	230	65.0	191.5	54.1
Informing Students about Becca				
Other Ways	117	33.1	115.9	32.73
Many Ways	200	56.5	209.4	59.16
Not Provided	37	10.5	28.7	8.1
AntiTruancy Efforts				
No	248	70.1	233.6	65.99
Yes	106	29.9	120.4	34.01
RUCA Codes				
Urban Core	187	52.8	223.6	63.17
Other Urban	59	16.7	48.9	13.8
Rural	108	30.5	81.5	23.03

Table 24a: Survey Summary Predictive Modeling Results

	Sum	Diff.	Avg per Sch.	Diff.
Actual SUA10	7803		22.0	
Improve teacher sensitivity by 1 category	6446.8	-1356.2	18.3	-3.7
Personalize alt and mh schools	5883.8	-1919.2	16.7	-5.3
Fewer penalties in alt and mh schools	6333.9	-1469.1	18.0	-4.0
Increase parent support by 1 category	7160.7	-642.3	20.3	-1.7
All changes together	3435.7	-4367.3	9.7	-12.3

Table 24b: Survey Predictive Modeling Results by School Type

Improve teacher sensitivity by 1 category

School Type	SUA10	Predicted	Difference	% Change
a Alt	777	722.4	-54.6	-7.0%
b RMH	6561	5342.7	-1218.3	-18.6%
c RE	465	381.7	-83.3	-17.9%
Total	7803	6446.8	-1356.2	-17.4%
Mean per Sch.	22.0	18.3	-3.7	-16.9%

Personalize alternative and middle-high schools

School Type	SUA10	Predicted	Difference	% Change
a Alt	777	716.8	-60.2	-7.7%
b RMH	6561	4700.4	-1860.6	-28.4%
c RE	465	466.6	1.6	0.3%
Total	7803	5883.8	-1919.2	-24.6%
Mean per Sch.	22.0	16.7	-5.3	-24.2%

Fewer penalties in alternative and middle-high schools

School Type	SUA10	SUA10Pred	Difference	% Change
a Alt	777	729.0	-48.0	-6.2%
b RMH	6561	5138.3	-1422.7	-21.7%
c RE	465	466.6	1.6	0.3%
Total	7803	6333.9	-1469.1	-18.8%
Mean per Sch.	22.0	18.0	-4.0	-18.4%

Increase parent support by 1 category

School Type	SUA10	SUA10Pred	Difference	% Change
a Alt	777	782.5	5.5	0.7%
b RMH	6561	5923.6	-637.4	-9.7%
c RE	465	454.6	-10.4	-2.2%
Total	7803	7160.7	-642.3	-8.2%
Mean per Sch.	22.0	20.3	-1.7	-7.7%

All improvements

	SUA10	SUA10Pred	Difference	% Change
a Alt	777	400.3	-376.7	-48.5%
b RMH	6561	2665.3	-3895.7	-59.4%
c RE	465	370.1	-94.9	-20.4%
	7803	3435.7	-4367.3	-56.0%
Mean per Sch.	22.0	9.7	-12.3	-56.0%