Taylor Smith

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English 1102

One of my fondest memories of being a child is trying to fake being sick just to get to miss a day of school. At least three times a month I would lay in bed early in the mornings and plot my mischievous scheme of how I would be able to get out of having to go to school. I would roll out of bed, stubble down the stairs and make my way into my parents’ bedroom. As serious as I could, in a sickly voice I would approach my mom and as her to feel my head because I was sure I had a fever. It never worked. She always knew I was faking and to her school was my most important obligation so unless I was really sick, I would be there.

Attendance policies in grade schools have always been a controversial subject. Although not a lot of research has been done, how attendance affects the education one receives has been a topic of interest. Several studies suggest that attendance is based upon the importance that is placed on it in the home and in schools. While studies discuss the importance that is placed on attendance a more specific area is how children of low income homes attend school less frequently than others.

In this paper I plan to discuss how attendance affects ones education in grade school. I will do this by creating my own play that incorporates information from my primary resources as well as secondary resources. I chose to do a play because I feel like I can get my point across and portray the different views on taken on attendance in schools. For my primary research I interviewed my mom who is an attendance counselor for Union County Public Schools. I also interviewed a student at a local high school to get his take on attendance in schools.

Characters

Mandy- She is an attendance counselor with Union County Public Schools and was a primary resource.

Terry- Acts as a teacher within the local school system. This character is based on the article, “Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism in Indiana: The Impact on Student Achievement.”

Sally- Acts as a teacher within the local school system as well. This character is based on the article, “Successful Attendance Policies and Programs.”

John- He is a student that attends a local high school and he contributes a small part of his opinion on attendance in schools. He was a primary resource.

Campbell- Acts as a truancy officer within the school systems. This is character is based on the article, “Indicated Truancy Interventions: Effects On School Attendance Among Chronic Truant Students.”

Faith- Acts as a parent of a student in the local school system. This character is based on the article, “Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools’ Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.”

Benjamin- Acts as a principle of a local school. This character is based on the article, “Predictors Of Attendance And Barriers To Cataract Surgery In Kenya, Bangladesh And The Philippines.”

*Taylor is conducting a causal interview about attendance in schools with several different school employees, parents and a student.*

Taylor: “Hi everyone! Thanks for taking the time to meet with me today. As you know, I would like to discuss the topic of attendance in schools and how it effects the type of education someone will receive. So to start, Mandy, since you are the professional with this kind of stuff, how many days are students allowed to miss?”

Mandy: “In elementary or middle school students that miss more than 10 unexcused or 20 altogether run the risk of being retained. High schoolers are only allowed to have 7 unexcused absences per class.”

Taylor: “ Terry, do you believe it is essential for students to attend school for a certain amount of days per year?”

Terry: “ I believe it is very important because students who attend school on a regular basis score better on academic test and learn more overall. I would consider any student who misses more than ten school days to have a chronic absence problem so I’m glad to see that there is some kind of punishment for students who do not comply.”

Campbell: “Personally, even though there is a punishment for these students, it does not mean that they will attend school. I found this out doing a small study on about twenty-five students.”

Taylor: “Mandy, besides being retained do students face any other kind of punishment?”

Mandy: “It’s pretty simple, Middle and elementary run the risk of being retained and high schoolers will fail that course.”

Taylor: “Sally, do you believe that there is a secret to maintaining an attendance policy and enforcing it?”

Sally: “Well, it is commonly believed and well supported by research that students who attend school regularly are more successful than those who do not. I think effective attendance polices are those that are clear and easy to understand, part of a strong, student focused school climate, provide opportunities for rewards and incentives and have strict penalties for truancy.”

Campbell: “Well in my opinion, Canada and the UK also have attendance issues but they seem to have found the key to cracking down on it. Maybe we should take some advice from them!”

Taylor: “Campbell, I agree with you. If they have found a successful way to eliminate some of the issue then we should definitely look into it.”

Mandy: “ That’s great and all but since that is not enforced here in the US yet I would like to add, in our school system if a child is under 16 years of age and they are not counted present in school a certain amount of days the parent is held responsible and can be taken to truancy court.”

Faith: “In my home, I always taught my children that school was required. You did not have an option to attend unless you were sick. I started instilling this into them while they were in Pre-K and until this day they still know that school is not optional so make the best of it. I think this is what more parents should try and do.”

Taylor: “Oh Faith that was an awesome to put it! I’m glad to know that some parents enforce this to their children. On the other hand how about the children who are chronically ill? How do you all feel about that end of it.”

Mandy: “There are exceptions for children who are chronically ill and have doctor’s notes. All of those dates are excused and not….(interrupted by Benjamin)”

Benjamin: “Yes, Taylor, any child with a legitimate illness that is confirmed and documented by the doctor will not be punished but Ms. Faith, I understand exactly where you are coming from but as the principle I have been looking into why students don’t come to school and it all seems to relate back to poverty or broken homes so not every child can receive the values that you have handed to your children.”

Taylor: “Benjamin this is true but for the ones who do have the parents to enforce this is I think that they should. Let’s change the subject a little bit. Terry, do your students receive any kind of incentive to attend school?”

Terry: “Currently our school system does not any type of reward for attending school. We have noticed that our attendance issues seem to stem from very low class families who do not see school as a top priority.”

Taylor: “John, do you think you attended school more when you had this option?”

John: “Of course I did. I had a reason to want to attend school. Now I can miss one day or seven days and it still won’t affect me so of course I will miss as many days as possible.”

Taylor: “I understand what you mean but when I was growing up my family always saw education as a way to better yourself so it was very important for me to make good grades and the only way to do this was to attend school every day unless you were sick.”

Mandy: “I feel like it’s important for kids to go to school because education should be top priority in their lives at this point.”

Sally: “I agree. But the only way to do this is to have a successful attendance policy and the only way to do that is create a policy that is clear and easy to understand. A policy that is also part of a student focused environment is necessary. If students were interested in what was being taught I do not think attendance would be of such an issue.”

Taylor: “Well that is about all I have for you guys. Thanks for the help.”

Since I began working on my inquiry project I learned that attendance in grade schools is a very controversial issue and is definitely not over looked by the schools and school systems around the country. Out of all of the resources that I read I found that no one can seem to settle on a good way to solve attendance issues. My suggestion to schools is to make the classes more student friendly. If students enjoyed coming to school I think that all of the attendance issues could easily be solved.

Works Cited

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