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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. I will do this by creating my own play that incorporates information from my primary resources as well as secondary resources.

Characters

Mandy- An attendance counselor (Primary Resource)

Terry- A teacher in CMS schools (Secondary Resource)

Sally- A teacher in UCPS schools (Secondary Resource)

John- Student (Primary Resource)

Campbell- Truancy officer (Secondary Resource)

Faith- A parent (Secondary Resource)

Benjamin- A principle (Secondary Resource)

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

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. 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.”

Benjamin: “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 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: “I understand this because 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.”

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

*Taylor is now interviewing a student and trying to get there perspective on attendance and the policies that come with it as well as allowing school employees to state their comments.*

Taylor: “Hi John. Do you receive any kind of reward for attending school?”

John: “No, I do not. Up until this year, if we had an ‘A’ in the class we could miss up to 3 days and be able to exempt our exams.”

Taylor: “Do you think you attend 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: “What kind of grades to do make?”

John: “I am typically an ‘A’ or ‘B’ student.”

Taylor: “Did you make straight ‘A’s’ when the incentive was in place?

John: “Not always but I definitely strived to make the A’s then.”

Mandy: “ I think that attendance just becomes an issue in high school because students have the option to drive themselves to school or just stay home. If they have an incentive to be there they will be more likely to show up.”

Terry: “I agree I think this all on the educators and if they are not going to give rewards for attending school they should at least make it fun to be there!”

Taylor: “Thanks again for everyone stating their opinions!”