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Divert to Engage: The Impact of a Partnership Between a School District, School Police, and a City on Student Attendance

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Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Divert to Engage:

The Impact of a Partnership Between

a School District, School Police, and a City on Student Attendance

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Michelle Castelo Alferes

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Divert to Engage:

The Impact of a Partnership Between

a School District, School Police, and a City on Student Attendance

by

Michelle Castelo Alferes

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Christina A. Christie, Co-Chair

Professor Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

School attendance is the strongest predictor of high school graduation. Through a mixed methods design, using independent samples *t*-tests together with student interviews, this study examined a partnership, between a school district, school police department, and city government, and its impact on school attendance as an indicator of academic achievement and predictor to graduation. The research focused on the experiences of 13- to 17-year-old students who were referred to Los Angeles Unified School District Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselors at FamilySource community agencies after committing minor law infractions through the partnership's arrest diversion program. The study used a systems theoretical approach, the 40

Developmental Assets framework, and the program's theory of change to illuminate how the program addresses individual, family, school, and community factors.

Findings revealed that over 65% of students (N=129) who were referred to interventions by a PSA counselor followed through and engaged in one or more of the recommended interventions. Types of intervention referrals included drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services and other services, such as anger management and recreational programs. No statistically significant differences were found in attendance rates between students who did engage in recommended interventions and those who did not. However, regardless of engagement in service interventions, 68.8% of students were not chronically absent. Student interviews revealed that the initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor may itself be an intervention that has a positive effect on students, regardless of their subsequent engagement in referral recommendations. The strongest impact of the program was on internal developmental assets, particularly commitment to learning and positive self-identity. The study shows some evidence of a promising program that diverts students away from the juvenile justice system by impacting psychosocial assets and thus educational outcomes such as attendance.

The dissertation of Michelle Castelo Alferes is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2016

DEDICATION

To my mother and father, my foundation and inspiration. To Landen, my son and my forever

light and joy. To Patrick, my husband, my best friend, and my better half. Words cannot express

how much I love you all, and I dedicate this manuscript to you.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the support of many people. I would like to thank the members of my committee, especially to my co-chairs, Tina Christie and Diane Durkin. Your expertise and feedback was beyond invaluable. Thank you for your support and guidance to help me think beyond. I would like to thank Mark Hansen and Todd Franke for pushing and challenging me to approach the study in different ways. I would also like to thank Cindy Kratzer for providing feedback on various aspects of the project and for your guidance through the whole process. Thank you to Jason Tsui who taught and re-taught statistical concepts and guided me through the quantitative section of the study.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the FamilySource PSA counselors and Pupil Services staff for providing feedback and data to make this study possible. More importantly, I would like to thank you for your dedicated and passionate service to students and families every day. I would like to thank my colleagues in Pupil Services for being a constant support through everything. I would also like to thank our LASPD and city partners for making the program even possible.

To Cohort 21, thank you for accepting nothing less than completion for me. I am grateful for the years of support and intellectual discussions. I would like to thank my friends for keeping me grounded. Finally, I would like to thank my loving family, especially my parents and siblings, thank you for reminding me what truly matters most in life and for being my role models. You have given me strength and unconditional love. Thank you to my husband, Patrick, for your patience, love, and sacrifices you made as I pursued my dreams. Thank you for being my best friend, for motivating me when things got difficult, and for making me laugh through it all. I am proud to be your RPS champion.

VITA

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CHAPTER 1:

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Approximately 2.6 million 16- to 24 year-olds nationwide (6.6%), were not enrolled in high school or did not have a high school diploma or equivalent in October 2012 (Stark & Noel, 2015). Approximately one in eight children in the United States never graduates from high school; in fact, every nine seconds, one high school student drops out of school (Lehr, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2004). School attendance is the single best predictor of whether a student will graduate from high school or drop out (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Bruner, Discher, & Chang, 2011; Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007), yet, according to national studies, 10–15% (or 5 to 7 million) students are chronically absent (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Moreover, research has demonstrated that missing school in the early grades highly correlates with low academic achievement in later years (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Hammond et al., 2007; Williams, 2000). Absenteeism is also a predictive factor for delinquent behavior, such as theft, vandalism, and substance abuse (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001; Henry & Huizinga, 2007a; Teasley, 2004).

The Project

Through a mixed methods approach, using independent samples *t*-tests and student interviews, this study examined how a collaborative partnership model between a school district, school police department, and city government impacted student attendance behaviors, including attendance habits and school engagement. I explored how a partnership model—which places a Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselor within Los Angeles FamilySource "one-stop family services" community agencies—addresses student risk factors, including individual, family, school, and community influences. The study examined what services were most and least helpful in affecting student attendance and school

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behaviors, according to different stakeholders. In particular, the study focused on 13- to 17-year-old students who were referred to PSA counselors at the FamilySource Centers through a school police arrest diversion program.

Background of the Problem

School attendance issues impact students across all grade levels, from elementary through high school. According to the California Office of the Attorney General report on California's elementary school absenteeism crisis, *In School + On Track*, one in 10 kindergarten and first grade students in the United States misses a month of school due to absences (Harris, 2013). In California, of the 691,470 children enrolled in elementary school, more than 250,000 school students miss approximately 10% or more of the school year (Harris, 2013). The report recounts that almost 83,000 California elementary school students have more than three weeks of unexcused absences.

Research has demonstrated that missing school in the early grades highly correlates to low academic achievement in later years (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Hammond et al., 2007; Williams, 2000). For example, researchers in California found that only 17% of children chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade were proficient readers by the end of third grade, as compared to 64% of their peers who attended regularly (Bruner et al., 2011). Conversely, recent research reveals that students who were chronically absent but later significantly improved their attendance saw gains in test performance in English language arts and mathematics (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Absenteeism is highly correlated with academic failure during later years because students miss instructional time (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2012; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Mac Iver & Messel, 2012).

School attendance carries impacts beyond elementary school years into middle and high school. In fact, chronic absentee rates, defined as missing 9% or more of the school year, are highest among kindergarten and high school students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) noted that in some high schools, particularly those in high poverty areas, as many as 75% of students do not attend regularly. Alarmingly high rates of chronic absences compel public schools to face the major problem of how to decrease chronic absenteeism among all school-aged children (Peek, 2009; Sheldon, 2007; Williams, 2000).

Correlates of attendance problems also lead to juvenile delinquency, such as "sexual activity, alcohol and drug use, violence, daytime vandalism, burglary, and other forms of delinquency" (Teasley, 2004). Middle school students who occasionally skip classes are more than four times more likely to start using marijuana than those who never skipped school (Yeide & Kobrin, 2009). Youth between the ages of 11 and 15 years old who are identified as chronic truants (missing more than nine days of school unexcused) are 16 times more likely to start using marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol than their peers who are not chronically truant (Henry & Huizinga, 2007b). Because of recent data and literature around attendance, schools and school districts are increasing their investment in programs targeting chronic absenteeism and attendance improvement (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Reflecting high absenteeism statewide, LAUSD, the second largest district in the country, has observed trends similar to those described above. LAUSD reported that, in the 2014-15 academic year, 13% of students were identified as chronically absent (LAUSD, 2015b). At the middle school level, 8% of students were reported to be chronically absent and at the high school level, 14% were chronically absent (LAUSD, 2015c; LAUSD, 2015d). Over one fourth of LAUSD high school students failed to achieve proficient/advanced (96% or higher) attendance,

and one in five students was chronically absent. Compounding the issues of attendance, 17.4% of students dropped out of school, according to the cohort dropout rate in for the class of 2013–2014 (California Department of Education [CDE], 2015). Sixty-eight percent of LAUSD students graduated from high school in the 2012–2013 cohort, compared to 80% of students statewide in California (CDE, 2015). Given that student attendance is a strong predictor of graduation and academic success, the district has refocused efforts on promoting attendance district-wide.

FamilySource Partnership Program: A Collaborative Approach

With the impact of attendance on student achievement and delinquency, schools, families, and communities are collaborating to raise attendance awareness. Literature states that schools need to focus on prevention measures to reduce chronic absenteeism (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008; Yeide & Kobrin, 2009). Prevention strategies include building meaningful relationships with students, families, and communities (Anderson et al., 2004; Peek, 2009; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Sheldon, 2007). Trusting relationships are integral to the implementation of a comprehensive approach to attendance (Lehr et al., 2004).

Currently, schools and districts alone are being held accountable for improving attendance. However, the responsibility to improve attendance is a collective responsibility among all stakeholders (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013). With this in mind, in 2014, LAUSD collaborated to develop a partnership with the City of Los Angeles to create the FamilySource Partnership Program (FSPP), which brought 13 PSA counselors into FamilySource Center community agencies. The program brought together one of the largest urban school districts and one of the largest cities in the nation to integrate a shared responsibility to address attendance concerns and decrease barriers to student learning and achievement in low-income communities.

FamilySource Centers provide services to families and youth, such as case management, parenting classes, financial literacy, tax preparation, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and recreational activities. Within the partnership, PSA counselors become liaisons between the school district and community agencies to navigate the school system, respond to family and student academic needs, and help families so they can be a positive support for students. The PSA counselors within the FamilySource Centers are also the primary intervention providers for the LAUSD and LASPD Diversion Referral Program, which provides a non-punitive enforcement model for students who commit minor law infractions. Students are referred to PSA counselors to receive academic, social, and emotional support resources rather than being cited and referred directly to the juvenile justice system.

One of the main goals of the partnership program is to increase graduation rates, increase rates of proficient/advanced attendance (96% or higher), and decrease rates of chronic absenteeism. The program seeks to accomplish this through individual support to students as well as parent education and engagement. What is not known is how the partnership impacts attendance and other barriers to achievement affecting students in low-income communities. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the partnership's influence on students' behaviors with respect to attendance and achievement from the perspective of students, parents, and staff, by asking the following questions:

1. What types of interventions are students referred to in a school district–city partnership?

2. To what extent do students in a school district–city partnership actually participate in recommended interventions?

3. What specific school district–city partnership interventions are identified to support students' attendance?

4. How do students describe the impact of the school district–city partnership program on their school attendance?

Overview of the Study

This was a mixed methods study. The intent was to learn about students' perceptions about school attendance after involvement with the FamilySource Partnership Program. The study employed a parallel process of collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. Quantitative data collection methods included gathering student administrative data such as school attendance and the types of interventions students were referred to. PSA counselors identified what interventions students were referred to as well as if students followed through with or engaged in the intervention referrals. Interventions included drug group counseling, individual counseling, youth development programs, and other services such as anger management and recreational activities. I used descriptive statistical analysis to answer the first two research questions. For the third research question, I conducted independent samples t-tests, where I examined the relationship between engagement in the interventions and students' school attendance rates.

For the fourth research question, to gain a deeper understanding of the impact the services had on students' observed behaviors—such as attendance, study habits, engagement in school, etc.—I also conducted student interviews. This allowed me to describe student experiences with the partnership program and how and if the services they utilized impacted their behaviors and attitudes. Students were asked what services they received from the partnership, such as case management, counseling, or workshops. They were asked what impact, if any, the services had on their attendance behaviors.

The FamilySource Partnership Program served as my study site. At the time of the research, the program involved 13 community agencies, LAUSD, the LASPD, and the City of Los Angeles. The 13 community agencies had school district PSA counselors placed at sites. FSPP was identified specifically because it is a partnership that involves a variety of organizations that support a unique juvenile diversion program for students solely within the school district. This juvenile diversion program gives students who commit minor law infractions the opportunity to meet with PSA counselors for counseling intake assessments where they are referred to additional service interventions instead of being cited and sent to juvenile court and possibly to the juvenile justice system.

Participants in the study included students served by the program during the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 academic years. The participants comprised approximately of 130 students who had been referred to FSPP through the diversion program. I conducted phone interviews with 17 of the students who had participated in the diversion program in either the 2014–2015 school year or the fall of the 2015–2016 school year.

Significance of the Research

The findings from this study provide valuable information to the district, school police department, and city government. Moreover, they may help guide future strategies of the FamilySource Partnership Program to support achievement for all students. While literature on diversion programs exists, most research has examined rates of recidivism rather than academic achievement as the outcome. Additionally, because there is a dearth of research on juvenile diversion programs that are constituted within a school district, school police, and city government partnership, this investigation provides an opportunity to understand how a diversion program that is part of a school district can impact student achievement outcomes.

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Results of the investigation can be used to inform policy, practice, and the design of other diversion programs. The uniqueness of the partnership lies in the fact that it is community-centered versus school-centered, involves several entities, and gives at-risk students an alternative to the juvenile justice system. The school district and its partners utilize this partnership program to divert students away from the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Christle, Jolivette & Nelson, 2005; Wald & Losen, 2003). Bringing counselors into one-stop community agencies to address student academic and psychosocial needs may be used as a national model for other districts and cities across the country. Findings of the study may support new paradigms of supporting students. Particularly in the event of budget cuts, a partnership model such as this—if shown to be effective—could be a cost-effective way to serve and support students most at risk.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School attendance is the single best predictor of whether a student will graduate from high school or drop out (Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Teasley, 2004). As such, this study examined how a partnership between an urban school district, school police department, and city-funded community agencies may affect student attitudes and perceptions towards school attendance. Specifically, I examined the behaviors and perceptions of students referred to the FamilySource Partnership Program through the LASPD Diversion Referral Program, an alternative to the arrest and citation of LAUSD students between the ages of 13 through 17 who may have committed a minor law violation.

Given the focus of the study, this literature review first presents dropout and graduation rates, as well as the effects of absenteeism on both. I then review how poverty exacerbates rates of absenteeism for low-income populations and discuss how absenteeism, more specifically truancy, can lead to juvenile delinquency behaviors. Next, I examine the complex reasons for student absenteeism, such as students' mental health needs, lack of parent engagement, or lack of a welcoming school culture. I then turn to empirically-based solutions, which include counseling services and parent engagement partnerships. I focus on partnerships and the collaboration model for evidence-based practices, highlighting the comprehensive school model, the Comer model, and the Promise Neighborhoods model. To conclude the chapter, I describe FSPP in greater detail. I discuss this program, the efficacy of similar juvenile diversion programs, and the composition and characteristics of students referred to FSPP through it. Here, I also present FSPP's theory of change, which provided a framework for the current study.

Declining Graduation Rates

Internationally, the United States has one of the lowest graduation rates among developed countries, ranking 22 out of 27 developed countries—lower than the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, Finland, and Denmark (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2011). Approximately 1.2 million youth drop out of school in the United States each year, and one of every four students who start their freshman year of high school do not graduate on time (Miller, 2011). Students who drop out are more likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors and eventually end up in the criminal justice system (Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In fact, close to 70% of state prison inmates in 1997 did not graduate from high school (Biegel, 2012). Among those who do not end up in prison, individuals without a high school diploma earn significantly less in their employment than their peers who do have a high school diploma (Irby, Mawhinney, & Thomas, 2013). Youth who drop out face limited employment and pay opportunities, affecting the global economy as a whole (Irby et al., 2013). Studies show that the decision to drop out proceeds over a series of events and for a variety of reasons (Hammond et al., 2007).

The National Center for Educational Statistics (Aud, Hussar & Kenna, 2011) reported that the dropout rate declined 5% from 1990 to 2011. Rates also declined for Blacks (from 13% to 7%), and for Hispanics (from 32% to 14%). While this decline reveals promising changes, rates of absenteeism, a major predictor of graduation, continue to be an issue. Statistics show that 5 to 7.5 million students each year miss nearly a month of school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang, Ginsburg, & Jordan, 2014).

The Magnitude of Student Absenteeism

Nationally, 10% to 15% of all students are chronically absent; rates are even higher in low-income communities. Up to one third of students in high poverty urban communities are chronically absent (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). California's attendance rates mirror national statistics. According to a 2014 report from the California Office of the Attorney General, more than 250,000 of the state's elementary school students are chronically absent each year (Harris, 2014). The study found rates went as high as 50% in elementary schools. Moreover, between 2010 and 2013, California lost $3.5 billion in average daily attendance (ADA), the primary source of state funding for schools, due to absenteeism (Harris, 2014).

Research shows that graduation, higher student achievement, school engagement, and improved grades begin with showing up to school (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008; Schoeneberger, 2012). A recent study of the Chicago Public Schools followed students from elementary to high school and found that attendance and grades were the highest predictors for graduation and success in high school (Allensworth, Gwynne, Moore, & de la Torre, 2014). In the subsections that follow, I discuss the impact of attendance at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Absenteeism is High in Early Years

Studies contend that early chronic absenteeism negatively affects academic achievement. In 2011–2012, 36% of four-year-old preschool students and 20% of kindergarten students were chronically absent from school (Ehrlich et al., 2013). By second grade, the rate of chronic absenteeism decreased to 12%. In early grades, absenteeism negatively impacts academic achievement in reading and math performance (Gottfried, 2009; Romero & Lee, 2007). Romero and Lee (2007) found that students with chronic absences in kindergarten had lower achievement

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in reading and math at the end of first grade. According to a study in California, only 17% of children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade were proficient readers by the end of third grade, as compared to 64% of their peers who attended regularly (Bruner et al., 2011). Conversely, 2013 research revealed that students who were chronically absent but significantly improved their attendance saw academic gains in test performance in English language arts and mathematics (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Absenteeism, either excused or unexcused, can be an early warning sign for being at-risk of academic failure and eventual drop-out. Schoeneberger's (2012) longitudinal study, which followed 100 students in an urban school district from first through twelfth grade, found that elementary students who were identified as "early truants" had a propensity for missing more than 10% of the school year in elementary school and beyond. Those identified as "chronic truants" had the highest prevalence of missing school across all grade levels, as well as the greatest risk for dropping out. Elementary years are the opportunity for children to develop biological, cognitive, and social factors that shape their sense of self (Schoeneberger, 2012). Unfortunately, according to Williams (2000), students who are chronically absent suffer socially and academically.

Absenteeism Has Negative Effects in Secondary School

School attendance carries impacts beyond early years into middle and high school. Chronic absentee rates are highest among high school students and kindergarten students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Some high schools, particularly those in high poverty areas, have student absentee rates close to 75%. Attendance is highly correlated with academic failure during later years because students miss instructional time (Balfanz et al., 2012; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Mac Iver & Messel, 2012). In a seminal longitudinal study that examined approximately

13,000 sixth grade students, Balfanz, Herzog, and Mac Iver (2007) found that sixth grade students who attended school less than 90% of the time increased their chances of not graduating.

Freshman year absences are also especially predictive of student graduation. Allensworth and Easton (2007) examined 24,000 Grade 9 students in the Chicago Public Schools. Those with four absences or fewer or at least 95% attendance in a semester had a significantly higher chance of graduating in four years. A student who had four or fewer absences in a semester was 24% more likely to graduate in four years than a student with five or more absences. Overall, there was a strong relationship between attendance in ninth grade and the probability of graduating on time. The literature illustrates the significance of combatting chronic absenteeism at both elementary and secondary levels, especially for particularly vulnerable populations, such as low-income students.

Poverty Compounds the Issue of Absenteeism

Poverty further exacerbates the problem of chronic absenteeism. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010, 13 million school aged children lived in poverty or "one in four students come to school from impoverished economic backgrounds each day" (Howard, 2010, p. 47). Low-income students are more likely to be absent more often than students who are not classified as low-income (Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz et al., 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008; Schoeneberger, 2012). Schoeneberger's (2012) study showed that school districts in urban high-poverty areas see increased daily absenteeism. One in 10 students who comes from an economically disadvantaged background is chronically absent (Harris, 2014). As a result of low attendance rates, 22% of children who have lived in poverty do not graduate from high school, compared to 6% of those who have never been poor (Balfanz et al., 2012). This percentage rises to 32% for students spending more than half of their lives in poverty (Balfanz et al., 2012). With

focused attention on improving school attendance for all students, particularly those in low-income communities (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Bruner et al., 2011; Hammond et al., 2007), it is useful to highlight research on the relationship of poverty, poor attendance, and delinquency.

Truancy, or unexcused absenteeism, is related to delinquency and substance use and abuse (Baker et al., 2001; Teasley, 2004). It is one of the most significant risk factors for first-time marijuana use and predicts 97% of first-time drug use altogether (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, & Dunkle, 2009). Truancy is also predictive of other violent and non-violent behaviors, such as fighting, battery, theft and vandalism (Baker et al., 2001). Delinquency is often tied to a student's lack of attachment or engagement with school (Henry & Huizinga, 2007a).

With all of these issues in mind, the current study examined a partnership's prevention and early intervention strategies designed to curb absenteeism and intervene with students at the early onset of delinquent behaviors on campus. Because the literature shows a connection between school attendance and dropout rates and delinquency, we need to understand programs and strategies that address and focus on these factors. First, however, in the following section, I examine definitions related to attendance and review the literature on reasons for absenteeism.

Understanding Attendance Definitions

While various terms, such as average daily attendance (ADA) and truancy, describe absenteeism, this study focuses on chronic absenteeism, which measures how many students miss 10% or more of the school year (Chang et al., 2014). Balfanz and Byrnes (2013) defined chronic absenteeism as missing 10% or more of a school year for any reason. For example, a school's ADA may be 96%, even if 45% of its students miss 10% or more of the instructional days in a 180-day school year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In this example, 45% of the student population would be considered chronically absent. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) argued that ADA

rates mask what is occurring on an individual student level. Chronic absenteeism refers to individual student attendance rather than a school's average daily attendance. ADA, on the other hand, refers to the number of days all students attend school during a given school year, divided by the total number of instructional school days. Chronic absenteeism moves attention from traditionally studied attendance measurements, such ADA, to a more focused measurement of individual student attendance.

Truancy is also distinct from chronic absenteeism. According to Section 48260 of the California Education Code, truancy is defined as missing more than 30 minutes of instruction without a valid excuse three times or more during the school year. For this study, I specifically utilize chronic absenteeism to define and measure perceptions of attendance behaviors. I do so because chronic absenteeism moves attention from traditionally studied attendance measurements, such as average daily attendance and truancy, to a more focused measurement of individual student attendance.

Conceptual Framework

Scholars typically argue that student absenteeism can be explained by one or a combination of four factors—individual, family, school, and community (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013; Baker et al., 2001). These four factor categories frame this study and make up the "ecological framework." The ecological systems theory, according to Bronfenbrenner (1976), views child development from a sociocultural perspective and within the context of environmental systems. Dupper (2002) contended that each child is "viewed as an inseparable part of various social systems, such as school, home, and neighborhood" (p. 5). As applied in school social work practice, the ecological systems perspective asserts that student behavior does not occur in isolation (Dupper, 2002).

Individual student variables include school avoidance, anxiety, poor physical health, social competence, and lack of understanding concerning attendance expectations. Family factors include lack of parental supervision, poverty, drug or alcohol abuse, lack of awareness of attendance laws, and differing attitudes toward education. School features include variables like school climate issues, such as unwelcoming and unsafe environments, and inconsistent procedures to address absenteeism, such as unclear consequences for absenteeism. Finally, community factors include economic and social environments where the streets a student takes to walk to school are unsafe and there is a lack of community services. These reasons for absenteeism can be exacerbated by socioeconomic status, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds (Baker et al., 2001; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Variables in each category impact student attendance and require different interventions.

40 Developmental Assets

In alignment with ecological systems theory, youth positive development theory supports the notion that individual and external assets (e.g., family, school, community) contribute to the positive development of youth (Benson & Leffert, 2001; Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011a). A framework of developmental assets was developed from theory and empirical studies of adolescent development and has developed into what is called the 40 Developmental Assets (Benson & Leffert, 2001). Instead of understanding youth from a risk factor perspective, the developmental assets are a conceptual foundation focused on understanding adolescent development through a positive lens of prevention of risky behaviors, improvement of thriving outcomes and resiliency, or ability to overcome adversity (Benson & Leffert, 2001). A developmental asset is defined as an "agent or characteristic of the individual or his/her developmental ecologies (e.g., family, peer group, neighborhood, school, community) that is

related to the increased probability of positive outcomes" (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011b, p. 204).

The more developmental assets a youth possesses, the higher the likelihood that the youth will have positive outcomes in overall youth development, be it academic, social-emotional, psychological, or behavioral (Benson et al., 2011b; Scales & Leffert, 1999). Multiple studies conducted by the Search Institute between 1990 and 2010, involving 3 million youth in Grades 4–12 in over 2,000 communities nationwide, show that positive outcomes, such as academic success, social and emotional health, and the absence of risky behaviors like substance abuse and violence, increase as the number of developmental assets increase (Benson et al., 2011b). In a longitudinal study involving a sample of 370 students, the higher the number of developmental assets a student possessed in Grades 7–9, the higher his or her grade point average (GPA) three years later (Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, & Benson, 2006).

Assets are divided into two areas: internal and external. Internal assets are categorized further by commitment to learning (e.g., achievement motivation, school engagement), positive values (e.g., caring, responsibility, restraint), social competencies (e.g., planning and decision making), and positive identity (e.g., self-esteem and sense of purpose). External assets include support (e.g., family support, other adult relationships), empowerment (e.g., safety, youth as resources), boundaries and expectations (e.g., adult role models, positive peer influence), and constructive use of time (e.g., youth programs; Benson & Leffert, 2001). Literature on these protective factors is consistent with the research on student attendance in that there are individual internal assets as well as external factors that contribute to attendance.

Individual System: Lack of Student Connection

Research cites individual factors that affect attendance, such as physical health problems, emotional disorders, anxiety, fear, behavioral issues, poor interpersonal and social skills, and other mental health issues (Teasley, 2004; Zhang, 2004). Students also may not come to school because they feel disconnected from school or feel anxious (Ford & Sutphen, 1996; Lauchlan, 2003; Williams, 2000). Disengagement may result from a lack of personal connectedness with caring adults or peers or feeling unsafe at school (Lauchlan, 2003). Lauchlan (2003) argued that individual students fail to attend school due to anxiety related to the school experience, which includes fear of a particular teacher, feeling rejected by a peer, fear of being bullied by classmates, anxiety about leaving parents, or dislike of or boredom at school. In other words, variables affecting school attendance include individual factors that leave students avoiding school.

Family System: Need for Parent Education and Engagement

The familial system presents a separate set of barriers to attendance within the ecological framework. A family's lack of awareness and knowledge of attendance expectations or differing attitudes have a negative effect on student attendance (Chang & Romero, 2008; Cole, 2011). Families may not always realize the importance of attendance in early grades, even though this is the beginning of formal schooling and an opportunity to build foundational academic skills (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008). Because some parents underestimate the importance of attendance, schools could benefit from communicating attendance expectations and building relationships with families. Beyond the early school years, students may also be dealing with familial domestic violence issues or with parents or other family members who struggle with mental health issues or drug and alcohol abuse (Teasley, 2004).

School System: Absence of a Positive School Culture

While individual- and family-level issues impact attendance, the ecological systems approach also considers the school as a factor affecting student engagement and attendance. School climate concerns include the relationships teachers and staff build with students, families, and communities. The environment on campus also contributes to overall school culture. For instance, if students feel a school is welcoming and safe, they are more apt to come to school (Chang & Romero, 2008; Comer, 1984; Lauchlan, 2003). As discussed previously, students who connect with others, whether they are staff or peers, are more likely to be engaged (Baker & Jansen, 2000; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Lehr et al., 2004; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

If students feel anxious about coming to school, Lehr et al. (2004) argued, it is part of the school's responsibility to address larger-scale issues that perpetuate those feelings. Problematic school climate issues involve an environment where bullying and truancy are commonplace, teacher–student relationships are impersonal or hostile, and areas on the school campus are not supervised. Climate also encompasses class size and overall attitudes of teachers, students, and administrators (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Baker et al., 2001; Cole, 2011). Schools may be inflexible in meeting the needs of diverse student populations, such as those from different cultural backgrounds or those with specific learning needs (Baker et al., 2001). How schools deal with these varying needs and connect with families and students are factors in reducing chronic absences.

Community System: Unsafe Neighborhoods and Lack of Resources

Community factors, which include safety and socioeconomic concerns, also affect school attendance. When students and families live in neighborhoods with high violent crime rates, it may be dangerous for students to walk to school or take the bus (Cole, 2011). Parents may be

more apprehensive about sending their children to school due to safety and violence concerns. Bowen and Bowen's (1999) study showed that with increased neighborhood violence, school attendance decreased. In their research, neighborhood danger and negative school experiences explained about 14% of the variance in student attendance. Cultural perceptions of education in a community, such as the importance of attaining a high school diploma, also affected student attendance. The availability of community resources and opportunities can also be a factor in student attendance and can help reduce chronic absenteeism (Bowen and Bowen, 1999).

Reasons for Absenteeism Magnified in High-Poverty Communities

Barriers to attendance in high poverty communities are typically exacerbated (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Baker, Dilly, Aupperlee, & Patil, 2003; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Mac Iver & Messel, 2012). For instance, poverty contributes to lack of parental supervision due to parents holding multiple jobs, transiency, or homelessness (Baker et al., 2001). In practical terms, parents holding multiple jobs or working night shifts to financially compensate may be too exhausted to wake up in the morning to get children ready for school (Chang & Romero, 2008). Some students also lack clean clothing to wear to school or lack access to adequate nutrition and food (Cole, 2011). Other compounding factors related to economic barriers may include a lack of access to health care, particularly for students dealing with chronic health issues, like asthma (Cole, 2011). Students may also miss school if they do not have access to immunizations and untreated illnesses. Detailing the concept of family-related issues affecting attendance are socio-emotional issues, such as domestic violence, mental health needs, or drug or alcohol abuse (Baker et al., 2001).

In the previous sections I have argued that in order to improve attendance, schools must intervene on multiple levels, from individual to school to community (Dupper, 2002; Teasley,

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2004). Research supports that it is important for educators and schools to recognize that student attendance is a complex issue, particularly for low-income students, requiring interventions on multiple levels and within different systems (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Teasley, 2004). The next section reviews interventions addressing reasons for chronic absenteeism.

Research-Based Solutions to Absenteeism

Public schools are compelled to decrease chronic absenteeism among all school-aged children (Peek, 2009; Sheldon, 2007; Williams, 2000). As a result, schools and school districts are increasing their investment in programs targeting chronic absenteeism and attendance improvement (Chang & Romero, 2008). While most research on attendance improvement concentrates on truancy and truancy abatement programs, studies in recent years have directed attention to prevention and early intervention strategies (Anderson et al., 2004; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008; Peek, 2009). A report by the National Center for Children in Poverty proposed a framework, "A Comprehensive Response to Attendance Problems," which outlines attendance strategies with differentiated interventions based on a student's level of need (Railsback, 2004). The tiered prevention and intervention approach involves building strong school and community partnerships, providing early outreach to families, educating parents about the importance of attendance, and combining positive supports to promote school attendance with interventions targeting those who are chronically absent (Railsback, 2004). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) found that the most effective strategy is prevention rather than later intervention.

Among prevention strategies, programs that build meaningful relationships with students, families, schools, and communities help to improve attendance (Anderson et al., 2004; Peek,

2009; Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Trusting relationships are integral to the implementation of a comprehensive approach (Lehr et al., 2004). Research maintains that schools should also concentrate on more systems-wide preventative measures and strategies on a larger, macro scale (Chang & Romero, 2008; Mogulescu & Segal, 2002; Teasley, 2004).

Baker et al. (2001) claimed punitive programs that refer families directly to court and emphasize blaming individual students or families for truancy are not effective in improving attendance. In fact, studies show that punitive strategies are counterproductive to resolving the issue of absenteeism (Baker et al., 2001; Teasley, 2004). The interventions discussed in the next section use strategies broadly discussed in Railsback's (2004) comprehensive framework. Because my study examined one partnership's strategy of working with students, families, schools, and communities, it is important to look at the evidence pertaining to making connections and building relationships with different stakeholders in order to improve attendance.

Connecting with Students

Encouraging supportive relationships with caring adults and peers correlates with positive attendance outcomes for young students (Anderson et al., 2004; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1997; Peek, 2009). A program called Check and Connect and other mentoring programs are examples of effective attendance strategies that "connect students." The Check and Connect program, originally funded by the U.S. Department of Education to prevent truancy, has attracted attention from researchers for its promising results (Anderson et al., 2004; Lehr et al., 2004). With the Check and Connect program, students check in with a member of a student advisory team, which includes counselors, administrators, or office staff. The school also develops regular communication with parents via phone, letters, or in-person conferences.

In a study of elementary students who received the Check and Connect program interventions for two years, 86% of the students showed increased levels of student engagement (Lehr et al., 2004). The study also evidenced significant increases in the percentage of students who were absent or tardy less than 5% of the time. Researchers found that students who had closer and higher quality relationships with staff were also more engaged in school (Lehr et al., 2004). Cole's (2011) action research case study found similar improved attendance results. The study examined 10 students from kindergarten and second grade who participated in an intervention that utilized the check-in approach with an incentive component. Seven of the 10 students increased their attendance supporting the intervention goal of building a school culture of caring and concern to increase engagement and attendance. Although the study utilized a small number of participants, findings paralleled those from Lehr et al. (2004). Just as in the Check and Connect program, other strategies, such as mentorship, give students an opportunity to connect with adults at schools.

Balfanz and Byrnes's (2013) more recent research on the Success Mentor Corps mentorship program, offered through the New York City Interagency Task Force, supports the significance of creating relationships with students to reduce absenteeism. Their study found that mentoring chronically absent students improved their attendance rates by 5%, on average, corresponding to an additional two weeks of instructional time. Mentors were drawn from a variety of sources—school staff, external agencies, and peers—and connected with students on a weekly basis. They were on campus and available to students three days per week and could check in regarding academic or other issues. The above-cited studies provide evidence that connecting students with caring adults and peers can improve attendance.

Creating a Positive School Environment

Aside from the more intensive prevention programs such as Check and Connect, relationships that students build on a daily basis with teachers and staff can also impact student attendance. Leonard's (2011) mixed methods case study on high school students found that supportive staff positively impacted student development and student attendance. Specifically, building a positive school culture and developing a sense of safety and personalization impacted attendance and student success (Leonard, 2011). Viggiani, Reid, and Bailey-Dempsey (2002) conducted a case study looking at a social worker–teacher classroom collaboration model in which teachers teamed up with school social workers to reduce absenteeism. Their results showed improved attendance when the teacher collaborated with the social worker versus when they worked separately when working with students.

Schools have also implemented attendance incentives and rewards for students as part of building a positive school climate (Cole, 2011). Recognition for excellent attendance provides positive acknowledgment and appreciation to children and parents alike. Peek (2009) conducted a qualitative research study at an elementary school to evaluate an attendance intervention called Perfect PALS. In this student incentive program, students who had perfect attendance for the previous month were invited to lunch, where they receive a treat, such as candy, popcorn, or a cookie, and had their names posted on the bulletin board. Peek found that more than 93% of the survey teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Perfect PALS incentive positively increased students' desire to attend school regularly. Other incentives, such as recognizing students by placing their names in newsletters, have also improved student attendance (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Ford & Sutphen, 1996).

The results of another study on an elementary school intervention program substantiate the notion that the incentive component results in increased attendance and positive feedback from teachers. Ford and Sutphen (1996) found that teachers believed the incentive component contributed to school-wide culture because it focused on rewarding all students for good attendance and not just those with at-risk attendance. Students were recognized for "perfect" and "good" attendance by having their names posted around the school and the principal acknowledging them over the public address system. Whether implementing incentive programs or developing positive relationships on campus, creating a safe and engaging climate affects student attendance (Sheldon, 2007). Research provides evidence that, within the ecological systems theoretical approach, the school system is another integral piece to creating connections for students to improve attendance.

Building Relationships with Parents

Both early and recent studies have shown that schools are more effective in solving issues of absenteeism if they work closely with parents to identify attendance problems and create home–school connections (Comer, 1984; Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1988; Sheldon and Epstein, 2004) and link parents to resources to meet basic and family needs. A number of more recent studies have shown effectiveness in involving parents to decrease absenteeism. In a much-cited longitudinal study on utilizing families as partners, Sheldon and Epstein (2004) looked at specific family involvement activities at 29 elementary and 10 secondary schools. School and family partnership practices, such as communicating about attendance expectations and celebrating excellent attendance, along with community collaboration, such as connecting chronically absent students with community mentors, decreased chronic absences from one year to the next in elementary schools (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

Sheldon (2007) conducted a follow-up study to validate results supporting school and home connections in Ohio. In a mixed methods comparison study of 69 schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools Program (NNPS) and 69 non-NNPS schools, Sheldon found that schools that reached out to involve and engage all families showed a significant increase in the rates of students attending school versus those that do not involve families. Other forms of absence prevention strategies that involve communicating with parents, such as parent contracts, notification of absences by letters, phone calls, and home visits, and postings announcing policies and expectations for attendance, have also proved effective (Chang & Romero, 2008; Williams, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Schools can also improve attendance by intervening and providing home and school connections (Baker & Jansen, 2000; Cole, 2011; Ford & Sutphen, 1996). The literature maintains that developing and coordinating services for families can help to reduce chronic absenteeism (Ford & Sutphen, 1996; Teasley, 2004). In a mixed methods case study, Ford and Sutphen (1996) explored the effectiveness of an elementary school-based incentive and intervention program. They found that interventions to link families to resources were successful in reducing absences for at-risk students. One of the components of the program was home-based interventions in which school social workers developed individualized interventions to address specific needs of families whose students were chronically absent. School social workers supported families in establishing morning and evening routines to prepare for school and worked to link families to community support services for transportation and other family concerns.

While data on programs that connect with students and families show promising results in improving attendance, there is a continued need for empirical studies. As such, the current

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study examined a partnership between a city and school district that connected counselors and resources with students and families to help improve attendance. In the next subsection I discuss research on these types of partnerships.

Partnering with Community Agencies

Studies suggest that schools partner with community organizations to educate parents regarding attendance and to provide necessary resources to reduce barriers (Sheldon, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). In their study of the Ohio collaborative approach to school improvement, Anderson-Butcher et al. (2010) found that schools that utilized community partners expanded their scope to support school improvement and student success. The research of the NYC Mayor's Interagency Task Force also confirmed attendance improvements resulted from citywide interagency collaborations that mobilized diverse agencies, such as the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Homeless Services, and the Department of Health (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013). Educating community members and organizations about attendance brings awareness about the issue and helps curb absences (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Cole, 2011).

Schools connecting with community resources use a framework that redirects attendance improvement away from traditional "walled-in" school improvement models to a broader multi-system approach (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010). Given the diverse factors affecting attendance, it is a complex issue, particularly for low-income students who may require interventions across multiple systems (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Teasley, 2004). With researched interventions that address attendance and absenteeism at each level—individual, family, school, and community—an approach that addresses all systems at once appears to be a

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promising approach. The following section describes how such a collaborative approach can address absenteeism.

Pointing Towards a Collaborative Approach

Partnership models are increasingly influential because schools and districts realize they cannot on their own meet the basic needs of students and also combat the effects of poverty on students' attendance (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2010; Bryan, 2005). The current study specifically explored a collaborative partnership between an urban school district and city government to address chronic absenteeism. In addition to the ecological systems theoretical foundation, the collaborative theory also frames this study.

Collaboration can expand involvement to educate students, help schools improve students' well-being, and build and maintain healthy communities (Sanders, 2003). Because children in poverty are more likely to deal with life stressors that put them at risk for disengagement, failure, and dropping out, educators and community members need to come together (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Bryan, 2005). Bryan (2005) argued that educators in urban schools are increasingly being held accountable for the achievement of minority and poor children.

Partnership reform initiatives bring together stakeholders to combat low achievement among students living in poverty (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Kania and Kramer labeled collaboration to improve educational outcomes as "collective impact," defined as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (p. 37). It has a "centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous community and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants" (p. 38). With non-profits, schools, and government agencies

often working in silos, a collective impact initiative works towards shared vision and shared outcomes.

History of the Home–School–Community Partnership

The home–school–community partnership and collaboration model originated in the 1960s through Comer's (1984) school development program theory of change research, which linked students' development and learning environments. It is derived from the notion of supporting the "whole child" (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Sanders, 2014). In the 1990s, school-linked services became increasingly popular. Attention grew because of the notion that students would not be able to attend or learn in school if basic needs were not met (Sanders, 2003). In this section, I review literature related to different partnerships aimed at addressing school attendance.

Sanders (2003) classified a variety of school–community partnership activities, including student-centered, family-centered, school-centered, and community-centered. Student-centered partnerships provide services to students, like student awards, incentives, tutoring, counseling, and mentoring activities. Family-centered activities service parents and the entire family through parenting workshops and counseling, family counseling, adult education, and family activities. School-centered activities are those that benefit the whole school, like beautification, staff trainings, and developments. And community-centered focus on community outreach and revitalization. Different partnerships use one or a combination of these types of collaboration activities. I discuss each in turn.

School-Centered Collaborations

Anderson-Butcher et al. (2010) identified different school-centered collaborations, such as community schools, multiservice or "full service" schools, school-linked health and social

services, and coordinated school health programs. School-centered models are aimed at meeting the basic needs and academic achievement of all students.

The Comer model. The Comer model was one of the first successful school-centered partnerships and a precursor to other collaborations that connect the home, school, and community. First piloted in 1968 in New Haven, Connecticut, Comer's Yale School Development Program (SDP) used the idea of serving the whole child. It is now being implemented in over 1,150 schools throughout the country (Comer, 1988). Comer (1988) argued that students from low-income communities enter school underdeveloped because of a lack of resources available to the child. Schools become the center or hub for social service and health collaborations.

Schools that implemented Comer's SDP model had decreased absences when compared to schools that did not implement it (Haynes, 1994; Haynes & Comer, 1990; Haynes et al., 1988). In Cook, Murphy, and Hunt's (2000) quasi-experimental four-year study, attendance was not directly measured, but results showed positive school climate was higher for SDP schools. While significant evaluations and empirical studies have been conducted, research that focuses on the impact of Comer's SDP model on attendance is still minimal. Still, SDP has helped pave the way for other partnership models indicating positive outcomes for attendance improvement.

Community schools and school-linked services. Other models include community schools and school-linked integrated services partnerships. These are widely adopted partnership models aimed at supporting student achievement and attendance. The goal of the community schools partnership model is to "ensure that children and youth and their families, especially those at risk, have coordinated access to a seamless web of health services, mental health services, social services, and other human services programs. This approach increases the

involvement of parents as consumers and key decision makers and fosters collaboration among practitioners within and among service provider organizations" (Amato, 1996, p. 305). Amato conducted a longitudinal case study of an elementary school that implemented the Healthy Start initiative, a program that began in 1991 that integrates services on campus to meet the needs of students and families. The study found that average daily attendance increased over five years, from 93% to 98%. Contrary to these results, in another study of Healthy Start, Newman (1995) reviewed 268 student records and found no significant attendance improvements of students involved in the program. However, later studies on school-linked services showed different results.

For example, Henderson and Mapp's (2002) literature synthesis on school-linked service partnerships concludes that integration of services at school positively impacts student achievement, including increased attendance. In Epstein and Sheldon's (2002) longitudinal study, activities involving parents and the school increased attendance and decreased absenteeism rates at 12 elementary schools totaling 5,000 students in rural and urban areas. Attendance rates over three years increased by 0.71% in ADA and chronic absenteeism decreased from 8% to 6.1%. Some activities used to partner with families included home visits, counselor referrals, rewards for student attendance, and phone calls home when a student was absent. Other studies on school-centered partnerships have also showed increases in attendance (Catsambis, 1998; Epstein et al., 1997; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Haertel & Wang, 1997).

Drawbacks to school-centered models. These school-linked services models and home–school–community partnerships impact attendance. However, Lawson and Briar-Lawson's (1997) study showed drawbacks to collaboration across 36 states on school-linked services, parent involvement, and community school programs. They found that while providers were

helpful in schools, there were neither enough providers within schools nor enough other schools within the district to provide services to all of the students and families who needed them. Particularly in communities with high at-risk populations, there were insufficient numbers of qualified providers to connect families to resources and services. In addition, some services at the schools were underutilized because parents wanted services that were not available, such as legal assistance, job training, counseling and support groups, etc. So while these models have shown a positive effect on attendance, the drawbacks show a gap in needed services.

Community-Centered Collaborations

Much of the literature on collaboration and partnerships identifies schools as the center of partnerships, where entities provide their services at the school site. However, new models are emerging—such as Strive, Promise Neighborhoods, Harlem Children's Zone, and the NYC Interagency Task Force—that bring entire community sectors together, including housing developments, schools, businesses, and government agencies. For example, the Harlem Children's Zone collaboratively connects educational, community, social services, and health resources to a high poverty neighborhood. The youth and families in the community are provided resources to support the whole child and family from when children are born to college and career. These neighborhood models utilize the school as the "hub" or centralized organization for academic services.

In the early 2000s, the idea of multisector collaboratives and partnerships emerged (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Because of the collaboratives' newness, few empirical studies exist on their impact. Some reports exist, but none have included improving attendance (Harlem Children's Zone, 2015; StriveTogether, n.d.). Nevertheless, as a promising practice, the collaboratives have received much attention from local, state, and even federal governments.

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The Obama Administration developed the "Promise Neighborhoods" grant in 2012 to connect different sectors—such as government, business, and education—to combat poverty and increase student academic achievement (Bathgate, Colvin, & Silva, 2011; Kania & Kramer, 2011). There is a system of shared accountability through Promise Neighborhoods between non-profit community organizations, schools, and government agencies to meet the needs of all students, including those living in poverty (Bathgate et al., 2011). Modeled after Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighborhoods function as a center for delivering social services, academic resources, and health and mental health programs to students and families.

Attendance research on multisector partnerships. There is currently a lack of empirical evidence showing improved attendance for multisector partnerships such as Promise Neighborhoods. Evidence of the value of school and community reforms tends to focus on reading and math outcomes, graduation rates, and school readiness, rather than on attendance rates. No research exists on partnerships that co-locate school attendance counselors into city-funded community agencies within a large city and its urban school district. The partnership that is the focus of this study resembles the Promise Neighborhoods model in that it brings together different entities. However, in contrast to the Promise Neighborhoods, the partnership locates counselors within non-profit, community-based agencies.

A City–Partnership Model to Address Student Outcomes

In 2014, a local collaboration between the LAUSD and City of Los Angeles was developed. The FSPP collaboration placed 13 LAUSD PSA counselors trained in attendance prevention and intervention into FamilySource Center one-stop community-based agencies to help improve attendance and decrease barriers to academic achievement. The PSA counselors are master's-level school district personnel with educational backgrounds in school social work,

licensed marriage and family therapy, or school counseling. FSPP brings together LAUSD, the second largest school district in the nation, and the City of Los Angeles, one of the largest cities, to integrate a shared responsibility to address academic achievement outcomes including high school graduation and improved attendance in low-income communities.

As displayed in FSPP's logic model (Figure 1), the partnership utilizes a multitude of resources to provide academic and psychosocial services to families and youth in low-income communities. PSA counselors provide assessments and referrals to different school district and FamilySource services. Services are free of charge and include case management, parenting classes, financial literacy, tax preparation, multi-benefit screening, case management, tutoring services, mentoring, counseling, and recreational activities. The FSPP collaboration brings school district PSA counselors into the community. These counselors understand how to navigate the school system, advocate for student academic needs, and address family factors that influence attendance and achievement. PSA counselors are housed within the community centers, work as educational liaisons at the centers, and provide academic services to decrease barriers to attendance. Their objectives are to ensure students attend school, graduate, and are college- and career-ready.

One of the partnership's goals is to increase rates of Proficient/Advanced attendance (96% or higher attendance) and decrease rates of chronic absenteeism. School district PSA counselors are available as educational consultants and experts in each FamilySource Center to help address attendance issues among students. With recent budget cuts, each entity shares a financial investment to address these shared goals to improve attendance and academic achievement. While collaboration between the school, home, community agencies, and urban housing departments can be successful, others have not specifically addressed student attendance.

Program: FamilySource Partnership Program

Program: FamilySource Partnership Program
Goals: Each FamilySource Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselor will:
Provide support to FamilySource Centers (FSC) to meet outcomes of academic achievement. Provide targeted trainings on improving attendance and academic achievement to students, parents, and agency staff. Identify barriers to academic achievement for families/students, such as health issues, mental health problems, lack of housing, language, and other barriers to academic achievement, through educational, psychosocial assessment. Promote parent education and engagement by providing direct training on academic achievement to identify barriers and create interventions designed to empower parents to help their children. Provide academic and clinical case management for parents/families to ensure proper linkage and follow through by families and service providers. Serve as a liaison between city and LAUSD staff to provide information on student's academic progress, attendance, and behavioral records. Assist FSCs to identify at-risk students. Outreach to surrounding schools and community programs to enhance recruitment and identify new clients. Be responsible for the data collection on students/families and utilize LAUSD data systems to provide data reports for FSC and city staff. Provide educational, psychosocial assessment and referrals for students referred through the LASPD Diversion Referral Program.

Inputs	Activities		Outcomes		
What We Invest	**What We Do**	**Who We Reach**	**Why this Project? Short-Term Results**	**Why this Project? Intermediate Results**	**Why This Project? Long-Term Results**
• Certificated PSA counselors • Staff • Time • Money • Materials • Equipment • District resource connections • Community resource connections • City resources • State resources • Federal resources • LASPD connections and resources • Research findings	• Conduct educational, psychosocial assessments with parents of students primarily between ages of 5 and 17 • Provide referrals to academic, parenting, counseling, and other services • Meet one-on-one with students and parents referred by LASPD • Teach the importance of attendance and education thru parent education and engagement • Conduct outreach in schools and community • Utilize program, city, county, state, and school resources to coordinate services for youth and parents • Collaborate with city, district, and LASPD staff to provide services • Advocate and empower parents and students to be involved in child's education	• Students (primarily 5–17 years old) • Parents • District programs and staff • School staff members • FamilySource Center staff members • Community organizations • Businesses • District leadership • City staff • City leadership • LASPD staff	*Learning:* • Knowledge and utilization of resources in the community and city • Knowledge of constraints affecting participant issues in their daily lives • Knowledge of barriers to attendance and learning for participants • Increase in positive self-identity • Knowledge of LAUSD system and its navigation • Knowledge of educational rights of parents and students • Knowledge of biggest needs in the community • Knowledge of factors affecting particular age groups in personal and educational aspects • Knowledge of key stakeholders in community • Knowledge of Diversion Referral Program	*Action:* • Increase in use of community resources • Increase in youth engaged, enrolled, and on track to graduate • Positive changes in academic achievement of students • Increase in school engagement • Increase in use of school resources • Increase in collaboration with community partners and organizations • Increase in access to social services for participants and families • Increase in collaboration with advocacy and community groups • Decrease in number of citations for low-level offenses • Increase in graduation rates of participants	*Conditions:* • Increase in graduation rates • Changes in community engagement • Economic benefits to participants (parents) and stakeholders • Decrease poverty in the community • Improved economic conditions in community • Changes in school climate • Changes in cycles of abuse and neglect • Changes in culture of law enforcement models

Figure 1. Program logic model for FamilySource Partnership Program (continued on next page).

Assumptions:	External Factors:
• Personal, home, community, and socioeconomic issues prevent students from completing their high school education • Through focused conversations with individuals, school completion rates will change • The importance of high school graduation is not known and/or not valued by all participants, family, and other stakeholders • The importance of attendance is not known and/or not valued by all participants	• Culture (home, school, community) • Socioeconomic status • Health • Environmental constraints • Politics and financial resources (district, city, state, federal) • Logistical Issues • Availability of Community resources

Figure 1. Program logic model for FamilySource Partnership Program (continued from previous page).

The current study examined the impact that bringing the school district into the community had on attendance for a specific group of students referred to the partnership by the LASPD Diversion Referral Program.

Understanding the FSPP Theory of Change

In 2014, as part of the city partnership, LAUSD and LASPD collaborated to provide the Diversion Referral Program. A district policy bulletin described the program:

> The LASPD Diversion Referral is a "non-punitive" enforcement model that supports strategic problem-solving models rather than citation and arrest-driven enforcement. It ensures effective and fair handling of student behavior by promoting positive solutions through the reform of student discipline policies and practices.

> The LASPD Diversion Referral is an alternative method to the arrest and citation of LAUSD students, between the ages of 13 through 17, who may have committed one or more of the eight identified minor law violations on school grounds or when a student is going to or coming from school to home. The LASPD Diversion Referral aims to address the behavioral and socio-emotional needs of students and families. Students who are referred through the LASPD Diversion Referral will meet with a FamilySource Partnership Program (FSPP) Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) Counselor, along with their parent/guardian, in one of the FamilySource sites throughout the city of Los Angeles. (LAUSD, 2015a).

Students who are referred through the diversion program meet with the PSA counselor along with a parent. They are referred for violating one of eight law infractions on the school campus, including possession of marijuana less than one ounce, fighting, possession of alcohol, vandalism less than $400 of district property and battery (Appendix A).

The arrest diversion program is a component of FSPP. While PSA counselors serve all students within the district and city, specific referrals from the LASPD are sent to the FSPP PSA counselors as a means to divert students who commit minor law violations, such as possession of alcohol, possession of tobacco, possession of marijuana, battery, theft less than $50, or vandalism of district property less than $400. FSPP's theory of change for the Diversion Referral Program (Figure 2) communicates how the program intends to impact change for students.

In the FSPP logic model (Figure 1) under "What We Do" and "Why This Project? Intermediate Results," it is noted that the partnership aims to collaborate with school police to support students who are referred for minor law violations. Some of the intermediate results of the program are listed as (a) increase number of youth engaged, enrolled, and on track to graduate; (b) decrease the number of citations for low-level offenses; and (c) increase graduation rates of participants. Given these goals and others, a theory of change further explains the process by which outcomes are reached for students referred through the diversion program. Although PSA counselors assess students in addition to those referred through diversion, I focus on the diversion component and students specifically referred for committing minor law violations.

The program's theory of change is grounded in ecological systems and positive youth development theoretical frameworks (Benson et al., 2011b; Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Scales et al., 2006). The program's support services aim to increase the number of protective factors or developmental assets to support positive student outcomes. Both internal and external assets are highlighted in the theory of change.

As noted in Figure 2, the theory is grounded in several assumptions prior to the change occurring for students: (a) service interventions are evidence-based and are supportive; (b) parents are supportive of students making a positive change; (c) PSA counselors have available resources to refer students to; and (d) schools, families, and communities support and are receptive to students making a positive change.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

↑

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, POSITIVE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, GRADES

↑

ENGAGEMENT IN POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

Student does not engage in risky or delinquent behaviors (ditch, fight, use drugs or alcohol)

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Student develops positive relationships with adults (e.g., counselor, therapist, teacher) and peers

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Student develops positive self-identity, sense of opportunity, self-management; student's attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school are improved

FAMILY SUPPORTS

Student's family is supported (e.g., basic needs, parenting support) to support student

EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS; STUDENT/PARENT FOLLOWS THROUGH AND ENGAGES IN SERVICE REFERRAL(S)

STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN INTAKE ASSESSMENT WITH PSA COUNSELOR

Student referred by school police for minor law violation

Assumptions: Services are evidence-based and are supportive; parents are supportive of students following through; PSA counselors have available resources to refer students to; schools are receptive to students making change.

Figure 2. Theory of change for FamilySource Partnership Program.

Given the assumptions, the theory of change begins when the student is referred to FSPP to meet with the PSA counselor. The student comes in contact with law enforcement, a school police officer at their school site, for committing a minor law violation. The school police officer, together with the school administrator or dean, makes the decision to refer the student to FSPP instead of citing and sending him or her to juvenile court for possible probation. The diversion itself reinforces some external assets, such as school boundaries; the intention is that the young person perceives that adults in the community value youth, that the school provides a caring, encouraging environment as well as clear rules and consequences (Benson et al., 2011b).

Once the referral is made, the PSA counselor contacts the parent/guardian to set up an appointment for the initial intake assessment, which is conducted during non-school hours. During this assessment, the PSA counselor asks about factors leading up to the incident, including reasons and triggers for participating in the behavior. The intake assessment is also an opportunity for the PSA counselor to ask the student and the parent about other psychosocial factors, including academic, mental health, legal, health, social, and family histories, to help understand the root causes of the student's behaviors. At this time, the PSA counselor also discusses current academic records, including grades and attendance; the counselor educates the student and parent about attendance expectations and evaluates the student's progress towards graduation. Oftentimes, the intake is a counseling session where future goals, behaviors, feelings, and motivations are shared with the counselor.

The intake process aims to reinforce both external and internal assets. By requiring the parent to be present and involved in the process, the counselor can emphasize external assets, such as parent involvement in school, family support, positive family communication, and safety (Benson et al., 2011b). Meeting with the PSA counselor within the community allows for

emphasis on other supportive adult relationships, a caring neighborhood, neighborhood boundaries, adult role models, and high expectations. Internal assets that the intake process supports are achievement motivation, school engagement, responsibility, planning and decision making, personal power, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose.

Service intervention referrals are recommended by the PSA counselor to further reinforce developmental assets and include even more assets. Referrals are based on the results of the assessment and include drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development programs that focus on gang prevention and recreational activities, and other services such as anger management classes or community service. These services promote developmental assets such as youth programs, creative activities, positive peer influence, the notion that the community values youth, a positive view of the future, integrity, peaceful conflict resolution, etc. Referrals are identified by the PSA counselor based on the availability of services at the FamilySource Center or other surrounding agencies. If, during the assessment, it is discovered that the parent/guardian is also in need of support, the PSA counselor will refer the family appropriately to further support family engagement to benefit students' external development assets.

Though students are not theoretically required to follow through on the service interventions, the PSA counselor highly recommends that the student do so. These support services aim to increase students' developmental assets by bringing a wider array of services that get to the root of the issues. As evidenced in the literature, developmental assets are predictive of student outcomes pertaining to prevention of high-risk behaviors, enhancement of thriving outcomes, and resiliency (Benson et al., 2011b). The intent of the diversion program and its theory of change are to improve students' outcomes, development and wellness, and overall well-being within the community, school, and home. The program's purpose is to also begin to

shift policy and programs within the community to support youth rather than resort to citations or incarcerations.

Impacts of a Diversion Referral Program

Through March of 2015, data show that the school police referred 405 diversion referrals to counselors in FamilySource Centers. Of the 405 referred, 198 students met with counselors at the community centers, 177 were in the intake phase, and 30 were identified as non-completions and referred to Los Angeles County of Probation. Fifty percent of the diversion referrals were for possession of marijuana, 27% for battery, 11% for vandalism, 5% for possession of alcohol, 5% for fighting, and 2% for theft. From the total referred, 66% were identified as Hispanic and 21% were identified as African American. Over 50% of those referred were identified as having attendance issues and were classified as chronically truant.

Part of the foundation for this intervention and use of the city partnership came from a deeper look into the data and a desire on the part of LAUSD and the LASPD for "a balance of intervention practices relating to possible minor offenses (infractions or misdemeanors) of the law and to further establish a non-criminal enforcement model that supports strategic problem-solving." Moreover, "This practice remains consistent with the District's 2012–2015 Strategic Plan for the LAUSD that espouses campus policing practices of 'non-punitive' enforcement methods rather than citation and arrest-driven enforcement methods" (LAUSD, 2015a, p. 1).

The diversion referral program addresses the impact of zero tolerance policies implemented in school districts across the country, including LAUSD. The literature argues that a disproportionate number of students who fall subject to the harshest disciplinary practices, such as suspensions and expulsions, are male, low-achieving Blacks and Latinos, students meeting special education eligibility, foster youth, and low-income students. School practices and policies

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push at-risk students out of schools and classrooms and into the juvenile justice system. This phenomenon has been identified as the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010; Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012; Noguera, 2003).

Schools respond to the disruptive behavior by disciplining students without addressing the needs at the core of the disruptive or problematic behaviors. Instead, schools often fall back on enforcing disciplinary policies that funnel students through this school-to-prison pipeline. Elements of pipeline include academic failure, exclusionary discipline practices, and dropout (Biegel, 2012; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Kim, 2009). The partnership allows counselors to address the behavioral and social-emotional needs of students and families, and it is an alternative to the arrest and citation of LAUSD students.

Literature shows that diversion programs, an alternative to traditional juvenile crime sanctions within the criminal justice system, can be beneficial depending of the types of offenses juveniles are referred for. In a meta-analysis of 548 studies from 1958 through 2002, Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman, and Carver (2010) found that certain characteristics help reduce rates of recidivism, including the risk level of juveniles. In other words, interventions for low-risk delinquents made a greater impact on reducing recidivism rates than did other characteristics like age, gender, or ethnicity. The analysis of studies also found that the types of programs and their philosophies made an impact on the success of the juveniles in the program. Interventions that focus on restorative justice—a form of conflict resolution, skill-building, counseling, and coordinated services, such as case management and service brokering—are more beneficial in supporting juvenile offenders and reducing recidivism. The analysis showed that the type of program, the length of time, and the quality of the program must match the needs of the youth.

Much of the literature focuses on diversion programs through juvenile justice systems (Campbell & Retzlaff, 2000; Dembo, Gulledge, Robinson, & Winters, 2011; Dembo et al., 2012) rather than through a school district and school police department, like the partnership studied here. For example, in a qualitative study of 5,865 juveniles referred to 32 programs in the state of Colorado, Campbell and Retzlaff (2000) found that successful program completion had more to do with what juveniles were arrested for—misdemeanor or felony. Dembo et al. (2012) found that successful enrollment and engagement in the programs were more dependent upon the communication and engagement of parents and families in the process. While many studies on juvenile delinquency program focus on re-offense rates, few studies have focused on effects on school attendance. This study looks to understand how a partnership program impacts the attitudes of low-risk offenders on school attendance and engagement.

Conclusion

This literature synthesis has reviewed key factors that affect attendance, reasons for chronic absenteeism, and research-based interventions, including collaborative systems models. The partnership between LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles is a one-stop community-based model to address absenteeism and overall academic achievement that also supports students referred through the LASPD Diversion Referral Program. Little is known about the partnership's effectiveness, however, in part because it was launched in 2014.

While much research has been done on various interventions through the different systems and partnerships, there is a dearth of literature about this new type of partnership model. Studies of other school–community partnerships have not examined student and staff perceptions on attendance, particularly perceptions of students identified as low-risk offenders and referred through a school police diversion program. Also, many studies on diversion programs for

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juveniles look at interventions within the juvenile justice system and are more focused on looking at recidivism rates rather than attitudes towards school attendance. With increasing pressures to partner and be cost effective, using community centers as the hub of family and student services may be key. Studying the effects of a community-centered partnership on student and parent perceptions of attendance may provide implications for other collaborations.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODS

This investigation examined how a collaborative partnership between a school district and city government impacted attendance and attendance-related behaviors of students who were diverted by a school law enforcement agency. I conducted independent samples *t*-tests to study the difference in mean attendance rates between students who engaged in service interventions and those who did not. I also explored student perceptions of their own attendance through student interviews.

The research took place in the context of a partnership program, FSPP, that placed an LAUSD PSA counselor within Los Angeles FamilySource Centers, which are one-stop family services community agencies. Using systems theory and the 40 Developmental Assets to frame the study, I examined how FSPP services impacted student attendance according to the different stakeholders. Specifically, I explored which interventions were perceived as most useful, which students were referred to most frequently, the extent of students' participation, and the perceived impact of the interventions on students' subsequent school attendance. In this chapter I describe the methods I used to investigate these issues.

Overview of Research Design

I employed a mixed methods research approach. Specifically, I conducted inferential statistical tests to examine the relationships between student attendance and partnership intervention data. In a parallel process, I conducted interviews with students to assess the impact of FSPP's strategies and to elicit subjective responses to explain their impact, if any. I examined administrative attendance data in relation to the services received at the center, including

individual counseling, drug counseling groups, tutoring, etc., to determine what services were related to attendance.

The student interview data complemented the inferential statistical analyses by offering a more in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions of the program. I asked a sample of 17 students how and why participating in FSPP and in specific interventions, such as counseling or drug/alcohol groups, did or did not impact their school attendance. Participants described how the program impacted them individually and supported their external supports. They described the impact of the program on their perceptions of themselves, their goals, and their relationships with adults and peers. This mixed methods design combined qualitative student interview data and quantitative attendance data to conceptualize and understand why students' attendance improved or did not improve.

<div align="center">

Research Site

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I used the Los Angeles Unified School District and City of Los Angeles FamilySource Partnership Program as my study site for its unique community-centered component of PSA counselors located within agencies, rather than the more common school-centered partnerships. In addition, I focused on students referred through a unique diversion program embedded within a collaboration between LAUSD and the district's police force, the LASPD. Within the site, I involved 13 school district PSA counselors who were located within FamilySource Centers. The community agencies were located throughout different regions of the city and provided diversion program support services to students, who were referred by the school police department.

In order to gain access to the sites, I submitted the study proposal to the school district's research unit for approval. In addition to the district's review board, I gained authorization from the city's Housing Committee Investment Development Department officials to proceed and

conduct the study. I presented the study as an opportunity to enhance service delivery in order to improve attendance as a measure of student achievement outcomes. Access to the sites was simiplified due to my existing relationship to FSPP as I discuss in greater detail in a later section.

Sample

The total sample size for the quantitative statistical analyses included 132 students, and the qualitative sample included 17 students. Both samples came from the same population of approximately 350 students who had committed minor law infractions, such as possession of marijuana, fighting, possession of alcohol, etc. All students in the total population were given an opportunity to participate in the student interviews – 17 students consented to participate. For the quantitative sample, it was narrowed to 132 students based on engagement collected from PSA counselors and administrative data collected from the district. Student participants were all between the ages of 13 and 17 years. Students were assessed between September 2015 and October 2016 through FSPP and referred by LASPD. My interview sample included only students whose parents provided consent.

To recruit the 17 student interviewees, the site staff assisted by sending a letter and consent form to ask parents if they would allow their child to participate. Parents called the researcher to provide initial consent via telephone, and outreach calls were made by the site staff to inquire about the willingness to participate in the study. In an effort to increase my sample size, an additional method of recruitment was used where an LAUSD Pupil Services staff member called parents to inform them about the study. I offered a $10 gift card as an incentive to each student who consented to participate. The participants were also entered into a drawing for a $100 gift card. From the group whose parents provided consent, students were also asked if they were willing to participate in the interview phase of the study. Once both parent and student had

consented, the interview was conducted. Students and parents were informed that the interviews were voluntary and confidential.

The quantitative sample was narrowed from a 350 student population to 132 as a result of the available data. Though 350 students were identified to be part of the program population, data collection yielded data for a 132 students. PSA counselors were asked, on a voluntary basis, to identify students' level of engagement in service. The PSA counselor responses yielded 132 records for the sample.

Data Collection Methods

Attendance Data

Current attendance data were retrieved from the school district for the quantitative sample of students. The attendance data were from the 2015–2016 school year. Due to inaccuracies in the 2014–2015 data, as a result of technical difficulties, the previous year's attendance data were inaccurate and could not be pulled. I obtained the list of students, whose identifying information was deleted and who participated in the diversion program, from a staff member within the Pupil Services unit from the district's data system. Once the list of students was pulled from the system, it was given to a data and accountability specialist within Pupil Services to pull individual attendance data for each of the students through MiSiS. The staff member deleted all identifying information, including student name, student identification number, and date of birth, before providing the list. The students in the sample were coded using a separate coding system for purposes of the project because students' identifying information was deleted.

Intervention Data

In order to obtain intervention data on what services the students were referred to and whether they followed through on the referrals, I used a two-step process. First, a Pupil Services

staff member pulled a report, using Welligent, that included case management notes indicating what services each student was referred to. The student list was divided by each of the 13 counselors. The counselors were then asked to identify, to the best of their knowledge, the engagement level of participants in the service interventions. If the PSA counselor indicated that a student had followed through on the referrals and services that were recommended during intake, the student was identified as engaged. If the counselor did not know the disposition of the referral, he or she marked "don't know." A student who "followed through" had participated in at least one session or event, depending on the intervention—for instance, at least one single-time group counseling session.

Participation in the identification of student engagement was voluntary, and 10 of the 13 counselors returned feedback. Before I received the list, students' information was deleted and each student was coded for the study. I then analyzed the intervention data in relation to attendance data. I matched the two lists by student code to create a master data list that included demographic information, attendance rates, and engagement in service referrals. From this process, I examined the relationship between students' attendance and engagement in services.

Interviews

The interviews, conducted via telephone, consisted of 17 student participants who were referred to FSPP by LASPD through its Diversion Referral Program. I asked what partnership program strategies, if any, affected their attitudes and behaviors related to attendance. I also asked if other factors may have affected their current school attendance. The interviews gave students the opportunity to share why and how certain strategies helped or did not help them. They described the elements of the interventions that affected them individually (i.e., internally) versus their environment (i.e., externally). Examples of partnership strategies included meeting

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with an attendance counselor, participating in drug counseling, and being referred to mental health counseling.

Using the ecological systems lens, I focused on individual and familial systems by asking participants about their connectedness, motivation, and family support to attend school (Appendix B). I asked students if, before receiving services through the program, they believed they attended school regularly, felt afraid to go to school, felt motivated to attend, had the resources to attend, and participated in school activities. The study investigated how the partnership strategies related to students' responses concerning how they felt about attending school. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded with an iPhone and transcribed by an online service without student names being mentioned. I had the interviews transcribed prior to my analysis to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the attendance and intervention data using inferential statistical analyses. I used correlational statistical test procedures, including independent samples *t*-tests to investigate the types of associations student attendance had with the interventions, if any. Using inferential statistics allowed me to understand how the partnership interventions supported attendance for students referred through the diversion program. For example, student attendance may correlate with different partnership strategies, such as individual counseling, drug/alcohol intervention groups, tutoring, etc.

The descriptive statistics yielded percentages of students referred to specific services, distributions of referred students by grade, ethnicity, GPA, etc. I examined the impact of referrals and intervention follow-through on student attendance. Because I did not have access to previous

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year data due to technological issues with the attendance system, I analyzed the relationship of intervention data with only 2015–2016 attendance.

As described above, in the interviews I asked students why certain intervention services mattered or did not matter in relation to the pre- and post-intervention changes. I also inquired about how the services impacted students' other perceptions of themselves, their families, other adults, and school in general. To analyze interview transcripts, I developed pre-set themes and coded the transcripts according to those themes as Maxwell (2012) identifies as organizational categories based on previous thinking and experience. I left room for other themes to emerge to allow for open-coding or for developing categories to emerge based on what participants stated (Maxwell, 2012). Some of the pre-set themes were pre-program and post-program perceptions, negative attendance, and positive attendance. During the analysis of the interview data, emergent themes arose organically. I then ranked the themes by the highest to lowest numbers based on the how many students shared similar ideas.

Ethical Issues

In this study, several ethical issues were taken into consideration. First, I am the direct supervisor of the counselors in the partnership and am the school district administrator who oversees the partnership program. To mitigate this conflict, I emphasized to the counselors and students that this study was entirely voluntary, particularly when I asked counselors to identify whether students followed through on services. I emphasized that my goal was to study the relationship of interventions utilized and student attendance. I framed my research to examine strategies and activities of the program, not counselors' job performance or whether students had good attendance or did the "right" thing. It was important for me to introduce myself to the students and parents as a district employee but emphasize my primary role as a graduate student

researcher. More importantly, when I interviewed students, I assured them they would be anonymous in the presentation of the findings.

Also, because FSPP serves students and parents who are part of a partnership program located in low-income communities, this study dealt with a vulnerable population whose members shared their personal stories, beliefs, and perceptions. To alleviate this concern, privacy was maintained by keeping the stories anonymous and by conducting interviews privately. I also assessed any potential risks that questions or protocols might have triggered. For instance, I was cognizant of responses that may have identified safety concerns. Finally, no identifying information of the students was shared throughout the study.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Addressing Validity and Reliability</h3>

To ensure my study's validity—in other words, to make sure that my findings actually measure what is really there—I shared the interview protocol with three content experts, including counselors and administrators, who were integral in the development of the program. They looked at the specific alignment of the research questions and constructs. I also conducted field pretests of the interview protocol with students similar to those in the sample. This allowed for initial feedback on the instrument. Following data collection, I elicited feedback from counselors by sharing transcripts and themes and engaging in discussions about what the data conveyed (Merriam, 2009). I presented my preliminary findings to the counselors to ensure my interpretations aligned with their experiences and perceptions. Further, I triangulated findings with multiple sources of data to compare and cross-check findings.

Role Management

A potential threat to my study was reactivity and how I would be viewed by participants. Participants may have shared comments simply to please me because I am the administrator of

the program. Another threat to the study was my personal bias. It may have been easy for me to fall into the role as an administrator enforcing attendance in the district and conduct the investigation with a biased perspective. Because I participated in the development and implementation of this program, my bias could lead me to draw conclusions that were not credible. To mitigate bias, I used rich data transcripts using direct quotes and allowed for themes to emerge in addition to preset themes in addition to the triangulation methods and consultation with content experts.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

In this study, several limitations are presented with the quantitative data. First, I did not have data for the entire population of 350 students. Instead, I had a sample of approximately 38% of the population. Second, I was unable to collect and examine pre-program and post-program student attendance data due to the inaccuracies of attendance data from the district's data system during the 2014–2015 school year. Rather, I focused on current attendance data. Given that students' intake dates varied between September 2014 and October 2015, there was wide variation with respect to time elapsed from the initial intake assessment to participation in services. Also, some of the counselors identified student engagement in services to the "best of their knowledge." Some were not able to obtain information from the agency of referral or from the parent. As such, I did not always have precise feedback from FamilySource Centers as to whether or not students followed through on referrals. The study interviews therefore focused on gaining a better understanding students' perceptions about their attendance patterns and attitudes towards attendance.

Because the interviews were conducted in the 2015–2016 academic year, I asked some students to recall their experiences from the previous year. While this approach was not ideal, it

was important to examine perceptions after the intake and intervention had taken place. Depending on when the student was referred, interventions began any time from September 2014 to October 2015. I conducted my interviews during January and February of 2016. Some students had two months from the time of their intake to the interview, while others had over a year. As such, some may not have had enough time to participate and follow through with intervention referrals.

Summary

This study's mixed methods design allowed for analysis of attendance data and student interview data to understand the relationship between student attendance and participation in services as well as their attitudes and behaviors from their own perspectives. Quantitative and interview data together allowed me to make inferences from the sample of participants about the perceptions of the population (Creswell, 2013), while also gaining a deeper understanding of participants' attitudes and meanings. The district, its police department, and the City of Los Angeles have all invested resources into the partnership. Each of these entities can utilize the study findings, discussed in the next chapter, to inform practice on how to positively impact attendance of students referred through the diversion program.

CHAPTER 4:

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

This mixed methods study investigated the impact of a partnership program's services and interventions on student attendance, specifically for students referred through a school police diversion program. As a means to divert students away from the juvenile justice system and to improve academic outcomes for students, FSPP collaborated with the LASPD to develop the Diversion Referral Program. Students caught committing minor law violations were referred to services at FamilySource Centers to address root causes of their behaviors and to improve psychosocial and academic outcomes.

Although juvenile diversion programs within the juvenile justice system have been studied, there is a dearth of literature on the programs' impact on academic achievement outcomes. Therefore, this investigation of a school–district–city partnership with a school police department explored the types of interventions students were referred to, the extent to which they participated in these interventions, the extent to which the interventions supported improved attendance, and the students' perceptions of how the program affected their attendance. As I described in the previous chapter, in order to explore these issues, I conducted independent samples t-tests of student attendance rates, as well as interviews with students.

In this chapter, I review the FSPP theory of action and framework for understanding the results. I then present the quantitative findings and describe the types of services students were referred to, their engagement in those services, and their impact on student attendance. In the following chapter, I discuss the qualitative findings and summarize findings from both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The FSPP Theory of Change

As described in Chapter 2, FSPP's theory of change illustrates how services and referrals impact student outcomes, particularly student attendance. According to the program's logic model, one of the long-term goals is to increase student graduation rates. The theory of change explains how the program intends to reach this goal for students who participate in the program, highlighting school attendance as a predictor of graduation.

Once a student is referred to FSPP by the LASPD through the Diversion Referral Program, he or she participates in an intake assessment with a PSA counselor, a school district employee who is located within a city-funded FamilySource Center. The PSA counselor meets with the student and a parent or guardian to discuss the reason for the referral and other underlying issues that may have caused the student to behave in certain ways. The psychosocial factors discussed in the assessment are social, family, mental health, medical, legal, and substance abuse history. During the assessment, the student's grades and attendance are reviewed. Based on this initial assessment, the counselor recommends services to various interventions. Possible intervention referrals include individual counseling, drug group counseling, anger management classes, boot camp, and tutoring.

The theory of change presupposes that if a student follows through on the services, his or her developmental assets are increased, thus leading to lowered likelihood of risky behaviors, as well as resiliency and positive, thriving outcomes, such as school success (Benson & Leffert, 2001). He or she is impacted in several ways that include individual psychosocial-emotional factors (e.g., self-esteem, confidence, motivation) and external assets (e.g., positive adult relationships and family supports). If these protective factors are positively influenced, then students will not engage in negative behaviors, such as truancy, drugs, fighting, or stealing. Once

students engage in the positive behaviors, they are more likely to improve on certain outcomes, such as earning passing grades and attending school more frequently, which is more likely to lead to graduation. This theory of change provided a framework in the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, discussed in the sections that follow.

Quantitative Student Sample

At the end of December 2015, I gathered demographic, attendance, and service engagement data for 132 students who had been referred to a PSA counselor in the partnership program for committing minor law violations. It should be noted, however, that some variables, such as gender, ethnicity, attendance rates, etc., were missing for some students in the sample, yielding different sample sizes for various variables. The district noted that some variables were missing due to record keeping issues, students checking out of the district, or reasons unknown. Various sample sizes are reported due to the missing variables. The total sample size with referral and engagement data were 132. Of the 132 students, administrative data (e.g., gender and ethnicity) were given for only 107 students. The gender and ethnicity variables were missing for 25 students (Table 1). When analyzing for trends in the missing variables for gender, it was noted that 96% or 24 out of 25 of the students with missing variables completed their initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor in the 2014–2015 school year. In addition, grade point average (GPA) data were available for 104 students, and attendance data were only available for 99 of the 132 students. The sample sizes also varied due to the combination of different data sources – administrative data and engagement data from PSA counselors. Throughout this results chapter, the varying sample sizes are noted.

Among students for whom the gender variable was captured ($N = 107$), 72.9% were male and 27.1% were female. According to California's Department of Education, the school district's

gender breakdown is 51.4% male and 48.6% female. This reveals that male students were overrepresented in the sample—that is, male students were more likely to be referred to a PSA counselor for a minor law violation. In terms of grade level, 78.8% of students were from high school. The highest percentage of high school students was in the ninth grade (34.1%). More than half of the students in the sample were identified as Hispanic (85.0%), and 10.3% were identified as African American. LAUSD's enrollment data by ethnicity show that 73.7% were Hispanic and 8.8% were African American. The sample data thus reflected a slightly higher representation of Hispanic students and African American students. Also, 87% of the sample participated in their initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor in the 2014–2015 school year; only 12.9% participated in the initial intake in the 2015–2016 school year.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	#	%	Missing (#)
Gender	107		25
Male	78	72.9%	
Female	29	27.1%	
Grade level	132		0
Grade 7	4	3.0%	
Grade 8	24	18.2%	
Grade 9	45	34.1%	
Grade 10	28	21.2%	
Grade 11	16	12.1%	
Grade 12	15	11.4%	
Race/ethnicity	107		25
Hispanic	91	85.0%	
African American	11	10.3%	
Filipino/Pacific Islander	2	1.9%	
White	2	1.9%	
Unknown	1	0.9%	
Intake year	132		0
2014–2015	115	87.1%	
2015–2016	17	12.9%	

The student outcome variables reveal that the sample ($N = 104$) was associated with a mean GPA of 1.39 on a four-point scale ($SD = 0.81$), which is below a "C" average (Table 2). The GPA data gathered for students who were in ninth through twelfth grades was cumulative from the time they enrolled in high school in LAUSD through December 2015. The GPAs ranged from 0.1 to 3.19, meaning that students in the sample with the lowest GPAs were failing to maintain a "B" average.

Table 2

GPA Descriptives for Sample (N = 104)

	GPA
Mean	1.39
Median	1.3
Std. Deviation	.81
Range	3.09
Minimum	0.1
Maximum	3.19

Note. Data were missing for 28 students.

The mean attendance rate (Table 3) of the students ($N = 99$) was 88.94% ($SD = 15.14$). According to LAUSD attendance data, to have proficient/advanced attendance, students who attended school from the beginning of the year should not have missed more than three days through December 2015. In this sample, an average attendance rate of 88.9% means that students missed on average nine days of school during that time. The lowest attendance rate in the sample was 35.14% (more than 50 days of school missed); the highest was 100%. The median was 94.59%. Eighteen student participants had perfect attendance from August 2015 to December 2015.

FamilySource Center locations varied among the students served through the program. Overall ($N = 132$), 10 of the 13 FSC locations with PSA counselors were represented in the sample (Appendix C). Just over a quarter (28.8%) of the students who participated in the intake

assessment came from a single center, and the next highest representation from a center was

18.2%.

Table 3

Attendance Rate Descriptives for Sample (N = 99)

	Attendance rate
Mean	88.94
Median	94.59
Std. deviation	15.14
Range	64.86
Minimum	35.14%
Maximum	100%

Note. Data were missing for 33 students.

Students were referred to PSA counselors by LASPD for various minor law violations

that occurred on school grounds (Table 4). Slightly less than half (44.7%) of students were

referred for possession of marijuana; the second highest reason for referral was battery or

fighting on school grounds (25.8%).

Table 4

Reasons for Referrals to PSA Counselors in Diversion Program

Reason	#	%
Missing	9	6.8
Possession of marijuana	59	44.7
Possession of tobacco	8	6.1
Possession of alcohol	6	4.5
Battery on school grounds	34	25.8
Vandalism	14	10.6
Theft	2	1.5
Total	132	100.0

In summary, the majority of the students were male, Hispanic, and referred for possession

of marijuana. Also, students were mostly from the ninth grade and were referred to the PSA

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counselor in the 2014–2015 school year. They had a mean attendance rate of 88.96%, below proficiency levels according to district standards. Next, with a better understanding of the student sample, I address the results of each of the research questions.

<div align="center">**Student Engagement in Intervention Recommendations**</div>

The first three research questions examined the section of FSPP's theory of change that focuses on engagement in interventions after a student meets with a PSA counselor, and the effect of this engagement on attendance rates. The questions focused on the outcome variable of student attendance rather than the process of change, which is addressed in the fourth research question. In this section, I describe the types of services students were referred to, their level of engagement in the services, and the impact of services on student attendance.

Interventions to Which Students Were Referred

All students in the sample were initially referred to PSA counselors at FSPP for committing minor law violations. For clarification purposes, I use the term "program" to describe the entire process of being referred by law enforcement to a PSA counselor and meeting with a PSA counselor for an initial intake assessment. By this definition, all participants in the student interviews participated in the program. In a later section I make the distinction between those who engaged with the program (i.e., followed through on at least one intervention recommendation) and those who did not.

The student and his/her parent or guardian were required to meet with a PSA counselor at the nearest FamilySource Center, based on the student's home address, after school hours. During the initial intake assessment, the student was first asked about the incident that led to the referral and what led up to the incident itself. The assessment then turned to questions about the student's academic and achievement levels, family composition and support, developmental and

health history, history of trauma, mental health history, substance abuse, social development, and

strengths. Once information was gathered by the PSA counselor, a case plan was developed in

collaboration with the student and parent. The case plan included recommendations for service

interventions. It is important to note that in this study I only report on recommendations for

students. During the intake assessment, PSA counselors may also have recommended services

for the students' parents or guardians.

Table 5

Types of Service Referrals (N = 132)

	Drug counseling	Individual counseling	Youth development services	Other
Referred	38.6%	37.1%	32.6%	32.6%
Not referred	61.4%	62.9%	67.4%	67.4%

I divided the types of interventions that students were referred to into four main areas:

drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services, and other (Table 5). Drug

counseling included group counseling that specifically focused on drug and substance abuse

support for the youth. About one third (38.6%) of participants were referred to drug counseling.

This was the most frequent referral made by the counselors. Next, individual counseling included

mental health counseling on a one-on-one basis with a therapist or counselor. Whereas the focus

of drug counseling was on substance use/abuse and was typically conducted in a group setting,

individual counseling targeted overall mental health and took place one-on-one. It included

referrals to mental health services, school-based services, or other community agencies. A total

of 37.1% of students were referred to individual counseling.

The third most common service intervention referrals were to youth development

services and other interventions, each at 32.6%. Youth development services included services

offered at the center site such as community programs focused on reducing violence and gang intervention and prevention, leadership, and mentoring. "Other" service interventions included tutoring, anger management classes, and recreational programs including sports, art classes, and in-school extracurricular activities or clubs.

It should be noted that there was variability among the requirements of the service recommendations themselves. For example, the referrals listed within the four categories had different timeline requirements. Some service referrals were ongoing weekly sessions with no set timeline, such as individual counseling, while others, such as drug counseling, were defined 10-week classes. Also, the recommended service interventions might have been at the FamilySource Center itself or at a school or another community agency, based on the availability of services and needs of the student. Depending on the home address of the student, the recommended referrals might have been anywhere from a few miles to more than 15 miles from home, although the PSA counselors tried to find and refer to services that were most convenient and accessible for the students and parents.

In addition to the variability of the types of service recommendation referrals, students were referred for single or multiple services, depending upon the assessment of needs. Specifically, students in the sample were referred to none, one, or a combination of two or three interventions (Table 6). The purpose of examining total referrals overall and the combination of referrals was to understand if different referral patterns exist. Of the students in the sample, 64.4% received a referral for one service intervention and 23.5% received two. Only 2.3% of the sample did not receive any referral to an intervention. Based on the findings from the initial intake, PSA counselors used clinical judgment to make the appropriate referrals.

Table 7 shows the breakdown of services by students who were referred to single or multiple services. From those students who were referred to one service, the highest number of referrals was made for drug counseling (20.5%), which is parallel to the findings of services overall.

Table 6

Number of Service Referrals Given (N = 132)

Number of referrals	#	%
No referrals given	3	2.3%
1 service referral	85	64.4%
2 service referrals	31	23.5%
3 service referrals	13	9.8%

overall. However, the second most frequent referral for those referred to a single intervention was youth development services (18.2%). This is different from the overall findings, where the second was individual counseling. For those who were referred to two service interventions, the most frequent combination of services was drug counseling and "other," at 8.3%. Again, "other" includes anger management classes, extracurricular activities, or recreational activities. Finally, the most common combination of three service referrals—received by six students (4.5% of the sample)—was individual counseling, youth development and other services.

Lastly, I looked at the type of service referrals by offense type or reason for referral (Table 8). Among students referred to the program for possession of marijuana, most were referred for drug counseling and individual counseling. For battery on school grounds, service referrals were spread between other, youth development services, and individual counseling. Thus, it can be deduced that students were referred to services that addressed the reasons they were referred to the program.

In summary, results show that PSA counselors referred students for drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services, and other services. Most students were referred for one service intervention; only 33.3% were referred for two or more services. Drug counseling was the most referred intervention—perhaps not surprising, as the most common

Table 7

Frequency of Service Referrals by Number and Type

Number/type(s) of referral(s)	#	%
No referrals given	**3**	**2.3%**
1 service referral given	**85**	**64.4%**
Drug counseling	27	20.5%
Youth development	24	18.2%
Individual counseling	20	12.2%
Other	14	10.6%
2 service referrals given	**31**	**23.5%**
Drug counseling & individual counseling	5	3.8%
Drug counseling & youth development	1	0.8%
Drug counseling & other	11	8.3%
Youth development & other	0	0.0%
Youth development & individual counseling	6	4.5%
Individual counseling & other	8	6.1%
3 service referrals given	**13**	**9.8%**
Drug counseling & individual counseling & youth development	3	2.3%
Drug counseling & youth development & other	3	2.3%
Drug counseling & individual counseling & other	1	0.8%
Individual counseling & youth development & other	6	4.5%
Total	**132**	**100.0%**

reason for referrals was possession of marijuana. In the following section, I describe engagement in these service referral interventions.

Table 8

Frequency of Service Referrals by Type of Offense (N = 132)

Offense	Drug	Ind	Youth dev	Other	Total
Possession of marijuana	35	24	10	15	84
Possession of tobacco	4	2	2	3	11
Possession of alcohol	3	3	4	4	14
Battery on school grounds	5	10	13	14	42
Vandalism	1	8	8	7	24
Theft	0	1	1	0	2

Note. "Drug" = drug counseling; "Ind" = individual counseling; "Youth dev" = youth development services.

Student Engagement in Intervention Recommendations

PSA counselors were asked to identify which students engaged in each of the service referral recommendations. Engagement data were missing for 20 students in the sample. As shown in Table 9, among students who were referred to at least one intervention and for whom data were available, 65.2% engaged in one or more of the service interventions. Drug counseling, the most common intervention referral, had the highest percentage of students who engaged in and followed through on the recommendation. The lowest engagement percentage was for other services, with only 37.2% engaging. Nearly two thirds of students referred for these interventions (62.8%), such as anger management and recreational activities, did not follow through on the services.

Table 9

Level of Engagement by Service Referral Recommendation (N = 129)

Referral recommendation	N	Engaged	Not engaged
Drug counseling	51	31 (60.8%)	20 (39.2%)
Individual counseling	49	25 (51.0%)	24 (49.0%)
Youth development	43	24 (55.8%)	19 (44.2%)
Other	43	16 (37.2%)	27 (62.8%)

Note. Data were missing for 3 students who were not referred to any service.

When disaggregated by reason for referral or offense, all eight students who were

referred for possession of tobacco engaged in the service recommendation (Appendix D). And 25

of the 30 students (83.3%) referred for battery on school grounds engaged in the

recommendations. The lowest level of engagement was among the students who were referred

for vandalism; less than half of these students engaged in the service referral recommendations

made by PSA counselors.

Table 10 depicts the number of students who engaged in services by intervention

combinations. For students to be identified as having engaged, they had to have engaged in at

least one referral recommendation. The highest engagement in services were of those students

who had three referrals because they were given the most opportunity to engage in at least one

service. Ten of thirteen students who were given three referrals engaged in at least one service.

Students who were given two referrals had the lowest percentage of students who engaged with

54.8%.

To summarize, over 70% of students engaged in a recommendation if they received one or three

referrals. Students who were referred to one or three service referral recommendations engaged

in the recommendation(s) more frequently than those who were referred to two recommendations.

With more than 60% of students engaging in at least one service recommendation, I next

compare the attendance rates of those who engaged and did not engage in service

recommendations.

Attendance for Students Engaged Versus Not Engaged

To understand which service interventions supported student attendance, I used an

independent samples *t*-test to compare the means of attendance for both groups of students. I also

used an independent samples *t*-test to compare students who engaged and did not engage in any

Table 10

Number and Frequency of Service Referrals by Type (N=129)

		Engaged in Referrals		Not Engaged in Referrals	
	N	#	%	#	%
1 service referral given	**85**	**59**	**69.4%**	**26**	**30.6%**
Drug counseling	27	22	81.5%	5	18.5%
Youth development	24	16	66.7%	8	33.3%
Individual counseling	20	13	65.0%	7	35.0%
Other	14	8	57.1%	6	42.9%
2 service referrals given	**31**	**17**	**54.8%**	**14**	**45.2%**
Drug counseling & individual counseling	5	2	40.0%	3	60.0%
Drug counseling & youth development	1	1	100%	0	0.0%
Drug counseling & other	11	5	45.5%	6	54.5%
Youth development & other	0	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Youth development & individual counseling	6	4	66.7%	2	33.3%
Individual counseling & other	8	5	62.5%	3	37.5%
3 service referrals given	**13**	**10**	**76.9%**	**3**	**23.1%**
Drug counseling & individual counseling & other	3	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
Youth development, individual counseling & other	3	3	100%	0	0.0%
Drug counseling & youth development & other	1	1	100%	0	0.0%
Drug counseling & individual counseling & other	6	4	66.7%	2	33.3%
Total	**129**	**86**	**66.7%**	**43**	**33.3%**

Note. Data were missing for 3 students who were not referred to any service.

service. Figure 3 provides a visual depiction of the statistical model. The overall statistical model illustrates independent sub-models using the four different service referral recommendations.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare attendance rates for students who engaged in a service intervention and for students who did not engage in a service intervention. Engagement, again, was defined according to whether a student followed through on a recommended referral by participating in the service at least one time. The model looked at

engagement for each of the four service referral recommendations—drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services, and other services. I present the results for each type of service separately.

Before presenting the results from the test, it should be noted that attendance data were missing for 33 students. Per district staff who provided the data, data were missing for these students for reasons such as, student was checked out of the district to attend an independent charter school or other school outside the district, dropped out of school, or for reasons unknown. For those students whose attendance data were missing, more than half of them were reported by PSA counselors as not engaged in any service (Table 11). Still, there were eleven students who did engage in the services.

Table 11

Level of Engagement for Students with Missing Attendance Data (N = 33)

Engagement Level	*N*	**%**
Engaged	11	33.3%
Not Engaged	22	66.7%

Cross tabulations showed the level of engagement by chronic absenteeism between those who were chronically absent (91% attendance or less than) and those who were not chronically absent (92% attendance or higher) (Table 12). Of the 86 students who engaged in services, more than half of them were not chronically absent. However, of the 43 students who were not engaged in services, 48.8% of the students were not chronically absent either. Overall, regardless of engagement in service, 68.8% of students who met with a PSA counselor were identified as not chronically absent (Appendix E). The following section discusses the results from the independent samples *t*-test.
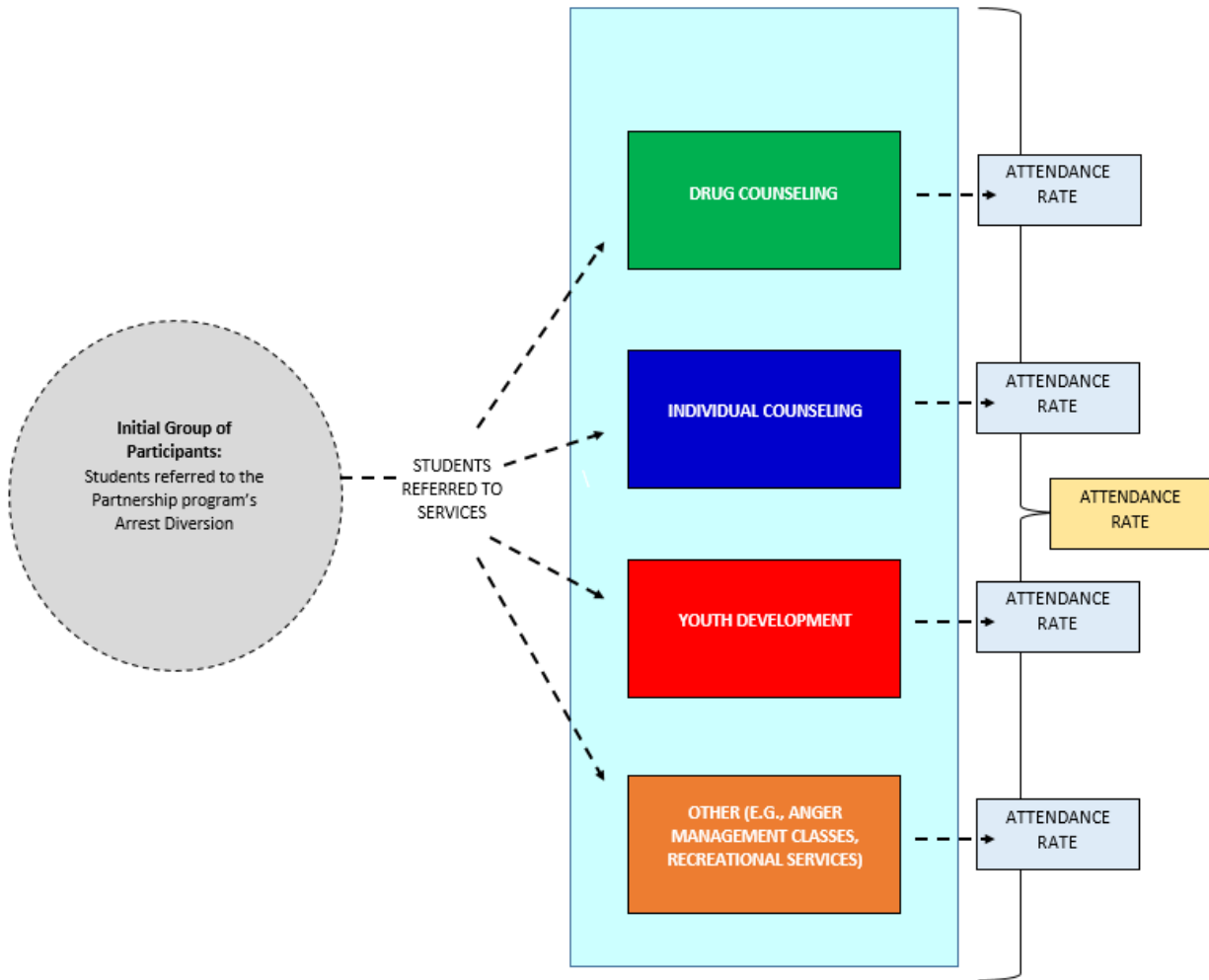
Figure 3. Statistical model of independent samples *t*-test.

Table 12

Level of Engagement by Chronic Absenteeism (N = 129)

	Students Not Chronically Absent (92% and above)	Students Chronically Absent (91% or less)	Students with Missing Attendance Data	Total
Not Engaged in service	21 (48.8%)	11 (25.6%)	11 (25.6%)	43 (100%)
Engaged in service	45 (52.3%)	19 (22.1%)	22 (25.6%)	86 (100%)
Total	66	30	33	

Note. Data were missing for 3 students who were not referred to services.

Independent samples *t*-test results. To test the hypothesis that the engaged and not

engaged groups were associated with statistically significantly different mean attendance rates, I

performed an independent samples *t*-test. I hypothesized that the two groups would be

significantly different in terms of their attendance rates. For students who engaged in service

interventions, their attendance rates were assumed to be higher than those who did not follow

through and engage in service referrals. The null and alternate hypotheses can be described by

the equations in Figure 4.

$$H_0: \mu_{engaged} = \mu_{not\ engaged}$$

$$H_a: \mu_{engaged} \neq \mu_{not\ engaged}$$

Figure 4. Null and alternative hypotheses of independent samples *t*-test.

Before performing the tests, I checked the assumptions of the independent samples *t*-test

to see if they were met. The first assumption was that the independent variable was categorical.

In this study, the categorical variable was engagement: engaged or not engaged. The dependent

variable, attendance rate, was continuous. There was also an independence of observations,

meaning there was no connection between the measurement of attendance in the two groups. In

comparing the means of both groups—engaged and not engaged—the attendance rates were

assumed to be independent of each other between participants. The test also assumed that the

attendance rate, or dependent variable, was normally distributed within the two groups of

students (Appendix F). A Shipiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) and a visual examination of their

histogram (Figure 5) revealed that the attendance rates were not normally distributed for each—

engaged and not engaged. It was noted that there was a long tail in the histogram. The attendance

rate mean for the entire sample of students was 88.94% and the median was 94.6%.

Finally, the test also assumed homogeneity of variance—in other words, that variance in the two groups was equal. According to Levene's test, *p* > .05, which, in this case, suggests that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met (Appendix G). Based on meeting most of the assumptions, the independent samples *t*-test was used to test if the difference between the attendance rates of the two groups was statistically significant.

First, an independent samples *t*-test was used to compare students who engaged in any service, including drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development and other, and students who did not engage in any service referral (Appendix H). There was no significant
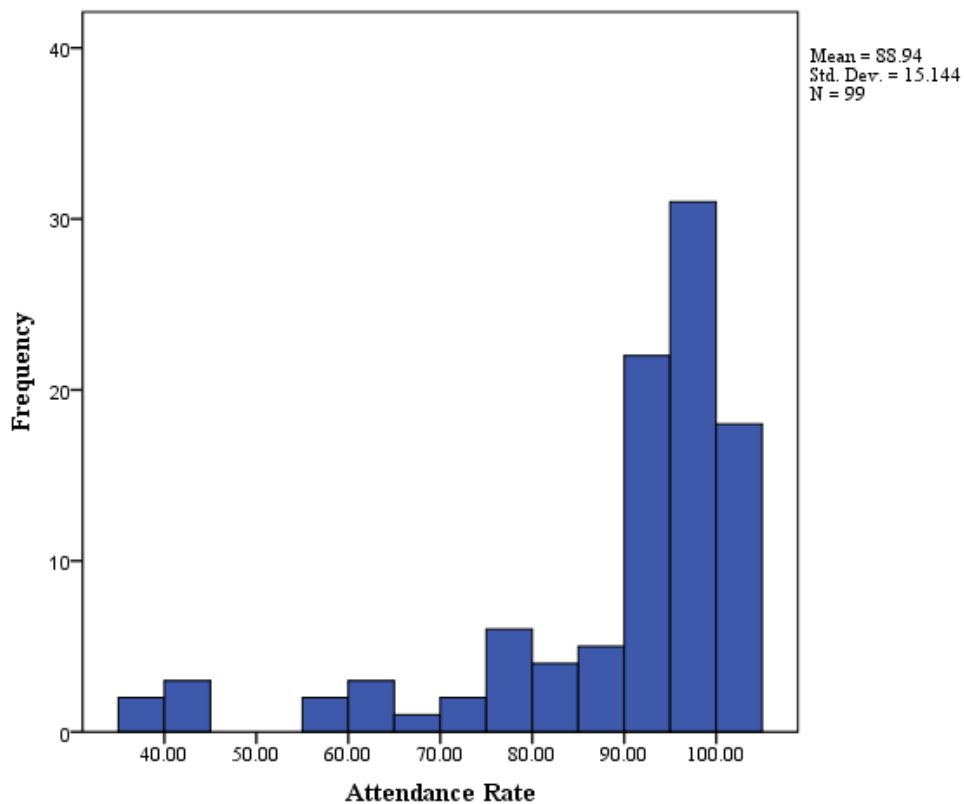
Figure 5. Attendance rate histogram to check for normality.

different in mean attendance rates for engaged students (*M* = 89.09, *SD* = 15.15, *N* = 64) and not engaged students (*M* = 88.85, *SD* = 15.77, *N* = 32); *t*(94) = .071, *p* = .898 (Table 13).

Table 13

Independent Samples t-test Results by Engagement in Any Service (N=99)

Engagement in any Service	N	M	SD	t	P
Engaged	64	89.09	15.15	.071	.898
Not engaged	32	88.85	15.77		

Note. Data were missing for 33 students who did not have attendance data.

For each of the four service referral recommendations, there was no significant difference in mean attendance rates between the groups of students who were engaged versus those who did not engage in the recommendations (Table 14). For drug counseling, there was no significant difference in the attendance rates for engaged students ($M = 91.62$, $SD = 11.74$, $N = 18$) and not engaged students ($M = 87.73$, $SD = 16.08$, $N = 12$); $t(28) = .768$, $p = .449$ (Appendix I). Because $p > .05$, the difference was not statistically significant. These results suggest that students who engaged in drug counseling interventions and students who did not engage in drug counseling interventions had similar attendance rates.

For individual counseling, there was no significant difference in the attendance rates for engaged students ($M = 88.14$, $SD = 14.62$, $N = 21$) and not engaged students ($M = 90.03$, $SD = 14.01$, $N = 28$); $t(48) = -.460$, $p = .647$ (Appendix J). Because $p > .05$, the difference is not statistically significant.

For youth development services, there was no significant difference in the attendance rates for engaged students ($M = 84.98$, $SD = 19.38$, $N = 21$) and not engaged students ($M = 84.77$, $SD = 20.36$, $N = 15$); $t(34) = .030$, $p = .976$ (Appendix K). Because $p > .05$, the difference was not statistically significant. These results suggest that students who engaged in youth development interventions and students who did not engage in youth development interventions had similar attendance rates.

For other services, there was no significant difference in the attendance rates for engaged students ($M = 90.75$, $SD = 19.37$, $N = 11$) and not engaged students ($M = 83.94$, $SD = 20.27$, $N = 22$); $t(31) = .923$, $p = .363$ (Appendix L). Because $p > .05$, the difference was not statistically significant. These results suggest that students who engaged in other interventions and students who did not engage in other interventions had similar attendance rates.

Table 14

Independent Samples t-test Results by Service Intervention and Engagement (N=99)

Service intervention group	N	M	SD	t	P
Drug counseling					
Engaged	18	91.62	11.74	.768	.449
Not engaged	12	87.73	16.08		
Individual counseling					
Engaged	21	88.14	14.62	-.460	.647
Not engaged	28	90.03	14.00		
Youth development					
Engaged	21	84.98	19.38	.030	.976
Not engaged	15	84.77	20.36		
Other services					
Engaged	11	90.75	19.40	.923	.363
Not engaged	22	83.94	20.27		

Note. Data were missing for 33 students who did not have attendance data.

Data from the independent samples *t*-test reveal there while there were differences in the means of attendance rates, there were no statistically significant differences in the means of attendance rates between the two groups. While the results from the independent samples *t*-test for engagement in any service and for service recommendations individually suggest that the attendance rates were not statistically significantly different. The independent samples *t*-test suggest that there were no significant differences between the mean attendance rates for students who engaged and did not engage in service referral recommendations, however the reliability of the data compromise may make the findings inconclusive which is described in the discussion

section. As I discuss in the next section, the student interview findings suggest why there may

not be a difference between the two groups.

CHAPTER 5:

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

While the quantitative data analysis suggests there was no significant difference between attendance rates for students engaged and not engaged across all interventions, the interviews with students suggest an explanation for the similarity. Specifically, the students described the program as having an overall positive effect on their attitudes towards school and attendance, whether they engaged or did not engage in the recommended interventions.

Student Interviewee Sample

A total of 17 students participated in student interviews, and all student names referenced are pseudonyms. Of the 17 interviewees, seven were referred for battery or fighting, seven were referred for possession of marijuana, two were referred for vandalism less than $400, and one was referred for stealing less than $50 (Table 15).

Table 15

Number of Interview Participants by Reason for Referral (N = 17)

Reason for referral	#
Battery	7
Possession of marijuana	7
Vandalism (less than $400)	2
Stealing (less than $50)	1

Most of the participants were in the ninth grade and the next highest number of participants was in the tenth grade, as shown in Table 16.

Interviewed students varied in their engagement in services. Nine stated that they followed through on service referrals, while eight stated that they did not follow through. All interviewees, regardless of service referral engagement, had participated in an initial intake assessment with a PSA counselor. The nine who followed through on service recommendations

Table 16

Number of Interview Participants by Grade Level (N = 17)

Grade level	#
Grade 9	8
Grade 10	4
Grade 11	3
Grade 12	2

participated in services such as group drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development, and other services. The eight other students did not follow through on recommended services and solely participated in the assessment. In the following subsection, I describe students' attitudes towards school and their attendance prior to the program.

<div align="center">

What Students Said

</div>

Negative Attitude Toward School Pre-Program

To give context on how the program impacted students, participants described their attendance before receiving the intervention. Fourteen of the 17 described their attendance and attitude toward school as poor (Table 17). Students indicated their reasons for missing school. As presented in Table 18, the top two reasons were feeling too "lazy" to attend and ditching due to apathy towards school.

Table 17

Students' Perceptions of Own School Attendance, Pre-Program (N = 17)

Perception	#	%
School attendance was negative	14	82%
School attendance was positive	3	18%

Table 18

Students' Reasons for Missing School (N = 14)

Reason	#	%
Feeling too lazy	5	36%
Ditching due to apathy	4	36%
Poor relationships at school (with teachers and peers)	3	21%
Lack of transportation/School too far	2	14%

Feeling too "lazy" to go to school. About one third of the students who stated that their attendance was poor described an overall lack of motivation or being "lazy." One student, Lorenzo, stated, "I was like, 'Oh, I don't want to get up.' Because I'm lazy. My attendance was like, I missed 92 absences. It was kind of bad, I guess." Lorenzo described not having the desire to put forth the effort to wake up. He admitted to missing close to half of the school year because of this lack of motivation.

Another student, Samuel, a twelfth grader, also used the word "lazy." Samuel shared how he wanted to participate in other, delinquent activities:

> My school attendance, it was not so good. I was attending Bradley High at that time. I would, I wouldn't show up to some periods in Bradley High because I would ditch with my friends in the morning. I'd go out and smoke weed. Be lazy. Like, "Ahh, I have to get up right now, go to school? Wake up at six in the morning, take a shower, and then leave my house by seven?" I was just lazy.

This excerpt shows that Samuel not only felt too "lazy" to go to school, but also made alternative choices, like "smoking weed." Like Lorenzo, he described how going to school took extra effort to wake up early and go through a routine to leave at a certain time. Instead of choosing to go to school, Samuel was motivated to be with his friends and engage in other behaviors. He chose to get up in the morning to "ditch" with his friends to "smoke weed." Although perhaps not consciously, the term "lazy" was frequently used by participants to describe their lack of motivation to get through challenging situations.

Another student, Paul, also explained that, prior to his participation in the program, he was too "lazy" to go to school because he had to find a way to physically get there:

> To be honest, I was too lazy to go to school because I didn't live around the area of the school I went to.…I didn't like walking to the bus stop, and then how long the bus would take and coming over here. It wasn't just school—I liked it and everything, but I was just lazy as hell sometimes. I'd stay home, play video games, just be on my TV or something. I'd just be asleep.

Paul lacked motivation and shared similar sentiments as the previous students that putting forth effort to attend school was a barrier. Unlike other students who used waking up early as an excuse, Paul stated that, because he lived far away, he "didn't like walking to the bus stop." For Paul, describing himself as lazy was a way to express his unwillingness to work through a demanding situation, where transportation was not readily available. Paul disclosed he would find other things to do aside from going to school, like sleeping, playing games or watching television. Students used unexcused reasons, engaging in risky and not risky behaviors, to divert from school. Whether it was waking up early or being forced to use public transportation, they perceived these as challenging situations and acknowledged that they were too "lazy" to overcome or work through them.

Ditching due to apathy. About a third of the participants who said their attendance was poor described indifference towards school that led them to "ditch." Like Samuel, who said he would "ditch to be with [his] friends," several participants described missing school because they did not care about their education. Francisco, a tenth grade student, stated:

> I used to ditch a lot. Like, for two months, a month. I don't know. It was cool. After a while, I just like started ditching a lot, and I just stopped caring. Yeah. That is it. It was because my dad went to jail and I stopped caring.…By that time we started ditching. That is for real. And yeah, I was peer pressured, so…yeah. I was with a couple friends, and then like, they all ditched. I was just like, "I am going to do it too," because they all did.

80

In this statement, Francisco described his apathy for school due to peer pressure confounded by family issues. He openly stated that he "ditched" before his father was incarcerated because he felt peer pressure. When his father left, he lost interest in school altogether: "I just stopped caring." He became indifferent towards school because of the difficult situation at home. Without a father at home, Francisco did not want to or could not focus on school. He did not perceive attending school as a priority as he had other situations, external from school, that he was dealing with.

Another student, Mark, supported the notion of students' lack of interest in school. He alluded to the idea of being apathetic because he perceived the end of the school year as more important than the beginning:

> I was ditching because I didn't care about school. It's the beginning of the school year, you know? Like, I'm going to get my shit together later. I'm going to get my things together at the end of the—later on, you know?

His idea was to get his "shit together later" and procrastinate putting forth the effort. Mark's apathy is further explained by the difficulty he had with challenging situations at school:

> Well, in the beginning of the school year, I would not go. I would go to school, but I would just like ditch a little bit. Before, I wouldn't care, you know? I would just—I would still go to some of my classes, but one of the hardest part is—what do you call it? Like, let's say P.E., where it's, I don't like running. So I wouldn't go, because it was, it was hard, I would not go to my electives and I would not go to my science class. I would just go to my important periods. For me, my important periods are math, English, and what is it called? History. For me, math is important because you've got to know math, you know? In my other classes it would be hard for me to know, like science. I don't know. I think for me they're not necessary, because I don't want to be a doctor.

Mark admitted that he did not care about school. However, his apathy was due to his avoidance of physically and mentally demanding classes. He chose classes based on his perception of what was important to him and by level of difficulty. Mark identified certain classes as "hard," meaning he would have had to put more effort in than he was willing to.

Rather than being forthright that his poor attendance was due to the level of difficulty, he

rationalized that his partial attendance was related to his long-term goals. Mark stated he

"doesn't want to be a doctor," thus reasoning that he did not need to attend his science class.

Being lazy or ditching were terms participants commonly used as they described their reasons for

not attending school, but the findings reveal that the terms masked situations that participants

perceived as challenging.

      Poor relationships. Consistent with the notion of difficult situations being a barrier to

attendance, three of 14 participants indicated a third reason for not attending school—poor

relationships with adults or peers at school. In addition to feeling apathy towards school, they

shared that poor relationships and experiences at school deterred them from attending. For

example, one of the ninth grade students, Dianna, described how she did not like school because

of her teachers:

> I wouldn't go to class because I would ditch school. I would go to parks and stuff like
> that. Because I didn't like school. Some of my teachers, I didn't like them. Some of my
> teachers were mean, like my math teacher.

Dianna did not go to school because of how she felt she was treated by one of her teachers.

Consistent with the previous findings that students avoided hard situations, Dianna further

explained her tenuous relationship with her teacher:

> That was my ditching semester, if you can call it like that. Math, my teacher pretty much
> didn't even let me go to class for a whole month until my P.E. teacher went to talk to him.
> I barely took three steps in the class, and then he would just be like, "Dianna, get out of
> my class." I wouldn't really care because he doesn't even teach like at all. Might as
> well—why go to his class?

> Because Dianna felt disrespected by an adult—her teacher—on campus, she avoided both.

She described feeling apathetic and said she "wouldn't care." But, similar to previous results,

Dianna's indifference appeared to be an excuse because she was dealing with a difficult situation.

She noted she would go to the park with her peers because she felt she was not being treated fairly and was even pushed out by her teacher. In addition, Dianna stated that she also did not see the point of going to school because she felt her teacher did not teach to her level of expectation. The quote initially suggests that it was because of the teacher that she did not attend; she placed the blame on an external factor. Rather than taking responsibility to change her actions or going to speak with her teacher herself, she relied on her P.E. teacher to advocate for her.

Dealing with challenging relationships also included relationships with peers. One of the participants shared that she missed school because of "drama with girls." Anna, a ninth grade student, expressed, "I hated school. I just disliked school and all the girls and the drama there. It [the drama] was just basically about boyfriends and, I don't know, just random girl issues." She did not go to school because of these perceived negative relationships. She did not want to face or deal with the girls at school, so she avoided the situation altogether by not attending.

Lack of transportation. The final reason that two students shared was another challenging, external factor—a lack of transportation. This deterred students from attending school because it took too much effort to get there. Overall apathy was complicated when basic needs were not met. While this was a reason for only a small proportion of interviewees, it is important to note. William shared:

> For example, attending Ocean Middle, that's not close and we don't have a car, so I had to walk. And I would come late to school, so late that it's like, why even come? I started taking a bus as much as I can, and after running low on money and stuff, I walked. But after so long it was hard.

William lost interest in school because it required so much energy to get there. Students and families who struggle with financial means may lack access to transportation, another barrier to school attendance. This student did not have the ease of transportation to get to school as readily as others, and a lack of positive peer relationships placed additional barriers to attendance.

Good Attendance Not Equal to Good Behaviors

Although 14 of the 17 students interviewed said that they believed their attendance was poor before receiving program services, a few stated their attendance was fair to good. Elena, a twelfth grade student, noted that her attendance was good but also said she was only motivated because she was forced to attend. She described her school attendance before the program:

> My sister was telling me to go, but that was the reason why I used to do drugs in school. Because I didn't actually have time to do it….Because I want to go finish school, but at the same time, I wanted to smoke and stuff. So I didn't miss school, but I did it all day in school. I was mad all the time and I was annoyed there. Yeah, I was like, "I don't want to go but at the same I do." I was there all the time.

Although Elena said she went to school regularly, her motivation was that she felt pressured by her sister. Without self-motivating factors, Elena did not positively engage in classroom or school activities. Instead, she participated in delinquent behaviors. Elena suggested she struggled with conflicting choices—graduate, attend school, do drugs. To remedy this conflict, Elena gave in to attending school and doing drugs while there. She attended not because of internal drive or motivation, but because she was forced to do so, resulting in her being "mad" and "annoyed" when she was there. Her reason for attending was not related to educational goals. Though few students attended school regularly before being referred to program services, their attendance did not equate to engagement.

In summary, the interview data suggest that the top reasons students missed school were because they were "too lazy" to attend, they were apathetic toward their education, and they had poor relationships with teachers and peers. They did not have positive associations with school and referred to themselves as being indifferent and "not caring." Further analysis suggests, however, that they missed school because of difficult and challenging situations they wished to avoid. For instance, they did not want to deal with teachers, peers, or even classes they perceived

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as difficult. Instead of putting forth the effort to work through the situations, they chose not

attend to circumvent these challenging circumstances. Despite their reasons for not attending

school, the students observed and shared that after involvement in the partnership program, their

attendance had improved.

Student Attendance Changed Positively

Participants shared that the program—in this case, the process of being referred by law

enforcement and participating in the initial intake assessment—helped to improve their school

attendance. As shown in Figure 6, 14 students perceived their attendance to be poor prior to the

program; after the program, 13 students viewed their attendance as positive or improved. Of

these 13 who perceived positive or improved attendance, nine were "engaged," or had followed

through on the intervention recommendations, while four had participated only in the initial

intake assessment with the PSA counselor.
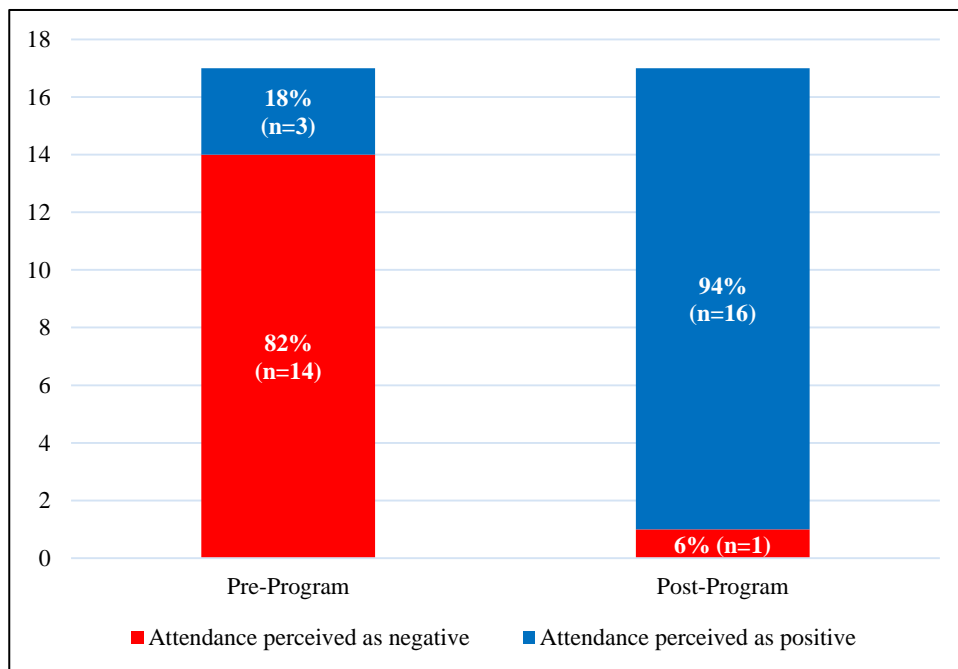
Figure 6. Students' perceptions of their own attendance, pre- and post-program.

Improved attendance was exemplified by one student, William, who stated, "I go to all my classes, Monday through Friday. I'm not absent for the cold or small things like that. I'm not absent daily, all six of my classes. I'm on time. No tardies." William recognized the importance of going to school every day and not being absent, even for minor reasons. This showed his commitment to attendance and avoidance of excuses for being absent. Though an illness like a cold could be perceived as a challenging circumstance, William alluded to it as a "small thing." Francisco, also expressed his shift in attendance behaviors from negative to positive:

> I stopped ditching after, and I kept going to school. I just started realizing, I was like, "What is with it?" It wasn't worth it. I was going to get nothing out of it. It was just like, just because when I didn't feel [like going to] school, and I didn't want to be there. Now I don't have a problem with going to school now. It was like I wanted to go more. Like I wanted to go to school more after I did that class. I could go to college and stuff like that.…Like, just that I needed to succeed in life. Like, I don't want to be no bum or nothing. I came with different mindsets in school.

Like other participants, Francisco developed a sense of urgency and a transformative shift in thinking to start engaging in school. After following through on the service referrals, he made the commitment to attend school regularly, realizing that not attending could result in him being a "bum." He thought that ditching and missing school was "not worth it," and he had the ultimate goal of succeeding in life. His own overall perspective on school changed from apathy to motivation toward goals. Rather than any external impacts forcing him to attend, his paradigm about his future shifted. Lorenzo made similar positive changes in his attendance:

> When they wake me up, I just get up. I don't mind. I just do. I don't know. Everything just went different after I went to that program. She [my counselor] kept on helping me for—so I could just do better. I just decided to be better.

Instead of viewing waking up as taking effort, Lorenzo had begun to overlook the challenge of waking up and now "just gets up." It became a habit, and he did not perceive waking up as a struggle as he had in the past.

Other students attributed their changes in attendance and engagement in school to the goal of graduating and being successful in the future. For example, although her environment or external factors did not change, Dianna's attitude changed when she started to think about her future:

> It's the same. I still don't like it but I'm trying to graduate. I barely have a late to class and I'm late to just one class. I don't like him [math teacher] at all. He's still really rude in class. I go to his class though because, I don't know, because I'm really trying to make my grades higher. I'm trying to make my grade go up. Now, I'm actually doing the work.

Dianna described how the negative situation with her teacher had not changed, but because of the program, she transformed her thinking and attitude towards school. She said that her teacher was still rude to her, but instead of avoiding the class or being rude back, she attended and completed her work because of her ultimate goal of graduating. Not only did Dianna attend school more regularly, but she also actively engaged in the class by doing work.

According to participants, their school attendance improved after participation in the program. The process of being referred to a PSA counselor, meeting with the counselor together with a parent and, for some, following through and engaging in the intervention referrals shifted students' perspectives about themselves, their goals, and their attendance behaviors. In the next section of this chapter, I present additional detail on why students believed their attendance improved after the program.

Transforming Internal Constructs Leads to Improved Attendance

The transformative shift in thinking about school came as a result of students changing their constructs about themselves and how they viewed their future. Students shared several reasons for improving their attendance; Table 19 displays the frequency with which each reason was mentioned during the interviews. The top three internal constructs that shifted students'

thinking were (a) they developed a sense of responsibility towards goals (82%), (b) they began to self-regulate and learned self-control (59%), and (c) they built their self-confidence (41%).

Table 19

Students' Reasons for Improving Attendance (N = 17)

Reason	#	%
Developed a sense of responsibility and goals	14	82%
Developed self-regulation, self-control skills	10	59%
Developed self-confidence	7	41%
Developed positive relationships	3	18%
Felt supported by family	2	12%

Partnership's Impact on Internal Assets

Students shared that the program had the greatest impact on their individual psychosocial and emotional assets. Whether or not they engaged in the interventions, the students said they developed a sense of responsibility, improved self-management, and increased confidence. These psychosocial impacts directly influenced student attendance, as the program's theory of change explains. Of the students who expressed the program impacted these assets, most had engaged in intervention recommendations. As shown in Table 20, half of the of the students who expressed that they developed a sense of responsibility and set goals had engaged in the intervention and the other half did not. On the other hand, a majority of the students who identified "building self-regulation and self-confidence" had engaged in an intervention.

Table 20

Psychosocial Assets, by Student Engagement in Service Referrals (N = 17)

	Engaged	**Not engaged**	**Total**
Developed a sense of responsibility	7	7	14
Developed self-regulation, self-control skills	7	3	10
Developed self-confidence	6	1	7

Developing a sense of responsibility. After going through the program, students became more optimistic about their futures and stated they had a greater sense of responsibility to make positive choices. They thought about their future goals, such as getting better grades, graduating from high school, or simply having a better life. Elena stated:

> It [attendance] did change because you're learning something, and if you start just doing drugs and wasting your time, later on, you're going to regret it. So I changed my attitude a lot with my family and my sister and everything and myself. I try to be more responsible myself and give my 100% at school so I can graduate.

As a result of the program, Elena realized there was a negative consequence to doing drugs and that doing so was "wasting time." She connected drugs and poor attendance as an indicator of not being responsible. Prior to the program she did not believe or care about how doing drugs affected her ability to graduate. Elena attributed her newfound sense of responsibility to her shift in attitude and change in perception about school, drugs, and graduating.

In developing responsibility, students realized that they were in control of their own futures and thus set goals. In the following excerpt, William, who went through the initial assessment but did not follow through on the referrals, explained how the program helped him develop a sense of responsibility to set goals for himself:

> It [the assessment with the PSA counselor] made me realize whether I succeed or fail in life is going to be on me. Not everybody is with you through the whole ride. At the end of the day, you're just going to have yourself, so why have a negative outcome instead of a positive one? You have your future in your hands at the age that I am. I'm young. She [the PSA counselor] made me realize that I have to be independent and not rely on somebody, and that helps me in school also. It gives me the push I need to try the next math problem and read the next page. Hearing that before the winter break, made me realize that you've got to attend school. Honestly, it did have an impact on me. I know it impacted me and just gave me a wake-up call. I had dozed off for a minute, but I woke up again. Just one of those on-track, off-track things. Indecisive. But, I started to look at the things, the reality, ever since then.

William viewed his experience meeting with the PSA counselor as a "wake-up call," alluding to a sense of urgency to change his behaviors. Using words, such as "sparks," "on-track," and "off-track," he shared the impact of the program that pushed him back on a path towards graduation. The program helped to "shake" him up and made him realize he is accountable for decisions that will impact him long-term. Instead of placing blame on others, he realized that it was "on him" to make the change. Finally, he viewed the program as a support to help him persevere, "to try the next math problem and read the next page."

Previously, students used difficult situations as excuses to miss school, but they, like William, shared how the program pushed them to work through challenging circumstances with the ultimate goal of succeeding and graduating. They began to see how their decisions impacted their lives. As Emma explained, the program helped students to navigate a path towards a future goal:

> I'm being on time for my classes. I'm not having anything on my mind on leaving school or anything.…I think I'm going to school so I can have this for my future, a goal for my future. I would say realizing what is coming for my future.

Emma shared how her attendance improved once she focused on the ultimate goal—her future. Before the program, Emma missed school and would be tardy. However, she became goal-oriented through the process. She and other program participants developed a sense of responsibility through goal setting and changing their thoughts about their future. Once they saw graduation as attainable, they changed their behaviors. Emma continued:

> I realized that many people that do not go to school have really bad futures. They don't have education or anything. They don't really have a good, successful life for their future. Their testimony, I guess, [is] about how important going back to school is. It made me realize my consequences. If I don't do my work at school, if I go to school and I don't do my work, there's no point in going to school because I'm getting my education and I'm not getting the grades I need for graduation.

Emma's transformative thinking process came as a result of hearing testimonies of those without a "successful life." She developed a laser focus on her graduation and education that resulted in consistent on-time attendance. Once she had positive thoughts that were goal-oriented towards graduation, she started to change her behaviors and made decisions to go to class on time. Her experience in the drug counseling intervention helped her understand how the choices she made would affect later outcomes. She began to view going to school, getting good grades, and graduating as precursors to having a successful life in the future.

In addition to envisioning a positive future for themselves, some students said the program developed a critical imperative to positively change directions despite any difficult situations or feeling too "lazy." Paul, another student who had not followed through on recommended interventions, shared that "laziness" would not help him attain his goals:

> Well, it's not that I didn't have a mindset on graduating, but I wasn't really into school. Then I ended up going, "Let me get my things together." I thought I'd go to school more. I don't know, I just had a feeling that I know I want to do good and stop procrastinating on that, so that's why. Not really, but I mean—I don't know, it's just I felt like I was just being too lazy at one point. If I kept being lazy I wasn't going to be able to do anything in life if I didn't go to school or nothing.

Paul acknowledged that having the goal of graduating was not the issue. Rather, it was the overall lack of motivation or feeling of laziness to attend and do well in school. However, with the support of meeting with the PSA counselor, Paul shifted his mindset and his behaviors positively to get his "things together" and go to school more often. There was a marked change in his behavior and thought process to stop being idle. He also expressed a sense of urgency to do well in school because of a daunting consequence of not "going to be able to do anything in life" if things did not change. Similar to other students, Paul used the term "lazy" to describe himself prior to the program; after, his laziness shifted towards a purpose.

Along with a strong sense of urgency to change, students stated their responsibility was tied to the realization that their negative actions would lead to negative consequences. They realized that engaging in delinquent behaviors would prevent their success. Francisco, a student who went through program but did not engage, expressed:

> I am focused in school now. I am trying to catch my credits up. That is what I have been doing lately. It [the initial assessment with the PSA counselor] made me realize a lot of things. I am going to say that. It wasn't all worth it, where I was going. I didn't think of the consequences much back then. I didn't really know there was going to be a consequence, so I didn't really care what was going to happen to me until after I got in trouble. I saw what was going on. I was like, "Oh,"and I worked at it. I think it was me that just messed up. Like, my friends, I wasn't thinking much. I was a freshman, so my friends were both ditching, and I copy with them. It was just me. I just changed.

Francisco noted that getting in trouble and meeting with the PSA counselor helped him realize his mistakes; he stated that change did not occur "until after I got in trouble," when he came in contact with law enforcement and was forced to the program or be referred to probation. During the assessment, the PSA counselor discussed possible consequences of not attending school, such as not graduating or being referred to the juvenile justice system. Francisco's quote shows how students' perspectives can change even if external, environmental factors do not. When Francisco revealed, "It was just me. I just changed," he admitted that his behaviors were related to individual decisions. Unlike the excuses for missing school discussed above—because of difficult, external situations—Francisco's shift was due to an internal drive and decision. Even if difficult situations were present, the program transformed some students' thinking about themselves and their future goals.

In this subsection, I have described how the partnership program affected students' pyschosocial facets by impacting their sense of responsibility to succeed. The findings highlighted students' sense of responsibility and realization that they had their futures in their own hands. They expressed being accountable for their own negative actions and understood that

those actions had negative consequences. Finally, there was a sense of urgency to change their attitude and behaviors in order to achieve their future goals. The students explained that though they had been "lazy" or tried to evade difficult situations that required effort, the program helped them to positively change their perception of themselves and their world.

Self-regulation. Developing self-regulation skills was the second most common reason that students said they improved their attendance. The program influenced their anger management and self-control. In particular, it helped students control their anger by giving them concrete strategies to manage their feelings. Seven out of 10 students who stated anger management skills were a result of the intervention had followed through on the service referrals from the counselor.

Mark, one of the students who followed through on the intervention, described what the program taught him in terms of self-awareness. Instead of impulsively reacting to difficult situations, he used self-control and learned skills to manage situations:

> Like, breathe in and breathe out, you know? I would think twice before reacting to something. Yeah, it would cause me—The principal would say something bad to me and I would get mad. It would pull my anger trigger. So from now on I think twice before doing something.

Mark learned techniques to control his anger through breath. He used self-regulation techniques to manage his emotions. He illustrated self-awareness when he stated that incidents would "pull my anger trigger." Because of what he learned in the intervention, he recognized his anger, paused, and calmed himself through breathing. When he stated "from now on," he alluded to the fact that previously he was not aware that he was being triggered by certain events to feel angry. He learned to pause and think before he acted. Even if difficult relationships at school may have previously triggered him to behave defiantly or walk out of class, he used self-control skills to work through situations. As described earlier, some participants shared that prior to the program,

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having poor relationships with adults at school was a reason for absence; however, with newly acquired skills, some students said they were able to self-regulate and deal with difficult situations.

Supporting the notion of improving self-regulation, the findings also reveal that students controlled their anger when dealing with peers. The excerpt below from Lorenzo affirmed how he learned self-control that helped him in school when relating with others:

> She [my counselor] made me know how to assess myself with my breathing and not being worried in class, just paying attention. It impacted me by learning how to know how to control my anger, learning how to not hit anyone anymore, and just get ready for what's going on. Yeah, it helped me to be around with people, because before I joined, it was hard to be around people. And it's like, okay, I can be okay to be around people. Well, yeah. My grades are getting better. I'm getting better.

Instead of allowing his emotions to take over himself, Lorenzo listened to his body, breathed, and paid attention to his reactions. Despite the continuation of difficult situations at school that previously were a deterrent to attendance, Lorenzo said his approach and perspective around those challenges changed. The program helped him to relate to others in general; he felt okay to be around others, and that control over himself helped him refocus on school with improved grades.

Another student, Peter, also expressed, "I started to not curse and cuss at my teachers. I talked about my problems and learned how to control some of my anger." His comment further exemplifies how students improved their relations with others because of their own internal change. Even if their situations with teachers did not change, the students themselves were better able to regulate their emotions and actions. This, in turn, supported their success in relating to teachers and being more respectful towards others.

Self-confidence. The program interventions also helped students to develop confidence in themselves to reach their goals. Once students felt confident, they began to do better in school,

which gave them even more self-assurance that they could succeed. The following excerpt from

Samuel exemplifies how confidence propelled him onto a path to reach his goal of graduation:

> For me now, I am confident. I would attend all my periods, do more homework. I would actually finish up homework, and I wouldn't ditch no more. I got a couple grades up, too. I think just listening and talking to everybody. Speaking in front of other people. Yeah, it brought my confidence up. Because I was shy, I wouldn't talk. Confidence to just stay on task, be responsible. I would talk to my teachers, too.

Samuel engaged in group counseling as a result of the PSA counselor's referral. He said the

services helped him advocate for himself and talk to his teachers. He previously viewed his

difficulty as not being able to speak up in front of others, but participating in the program gave

him a voice. This made him feel more confident to accomplish and overcome barriers, which

translated to attending school more frequently and finishing homework.

Students also shared that because the program helped to change their behaviors, the new,

positive behaviors built self-confidence. Anna, who participated in individual counseling,

realized that engaging in school ultimately made her feel better about herself:

> I feel that it's a really good program and kids should just go there. It really opened my eyes and made me realize things.…That being basically a better person, because before I didn't really go to school a lot and, like I said, I missed some days. And now that they give me advice and talked to me about everything, like other people and my classes, when things get hard I figure it out and know it's not worth it to get in trouble. It makes me go to school every day and makes me just feel better about myself.

Once Anna started attending school daily, the act of doing something good for herself made her

feel better. She discussed how things were "hard," but with the support of the counselor she

learned ways to cope. She realized that how she dealt with difficult situations previously would

get her in trouble. The counseling itself and the advice that was provided supported students to

feel self-assured.

In this section, I have presented evidence that students were impacted by program

services through psychosocial facets. Students stated that they did not attend school prior to the

program because they ditched or felt lazy, but through deeper analysis it became clear that the terms were used to mask students' difficulties in dealing with difficult situations, such as dealing with teachers, peers, or certain classes, which deterred them from attending. While the challenges in school remained, the program helped students to change their perceptions of themselves by building self-confidence, anger management skills, and a sense of responsibility.

The program changed students' own perceptions and behaviors, even if the environmental factors did not change. These positive changes impacted their behaviors, which indirectly affected their attendance and their focus on completing homework and graduating. The shift in constructs of thinking occurred for students who were engaged as well as for those who were not engaged in the interventions, although when students followed through on services, there was stronger evidence for developing self-regulation skills and self-confidence. The following section presents evidence that the program also impact students' external assets.

Developing External Positive Assets

As the program's theory of change indicates, students who follow through on service recommendations should develop positive, caring adult relationships and have supportive family relationships. Although only three students cited this element of the program as impactful, their insights are instructive.

Students developed relationships with therapists and counselors and said they now go to these adults for advice. Emma, who participated in counseling and tutoring, stated:

> The counselors, they're into you, they help you more. They weren't just people telling you what to do and that they cared.…They said if we ever needed to talk that you can go to them and we can open up to them. They understand what you've been through.

Emma expressed how her counselor was part of her support system during difficult times. She continued, "The counselors make me want to go back and see them." Emma had an affinity and connection to the caring adults at the center, and this allowed her to build external supports.

William, who only went to see the PSA counselor and did not follow through on services, stated that the counselor supported him and was a positive force in his life:

> She was letting me know enough to have that in my mind, to do this, keep good grades, because teachers want me to get good grades so I can come back to school. She was making me realize, do it for yourself. You balance yourself.

William described the influence his counselor had on him, saying he had a positive adult figure in his life whom he listened to and connected with. The counselor was an external force and asset that allowed him to positively engage in school. Though there is a lack of evidence that relationships with the caring adults in the program were long-term positive relationships, students asserted that the support personnel, such as the PSA counselors, were caring adults who motivated them to persevere through difficult situations.

Anna discussed how the program helped her with deal with peers. She described her attitude toward going to school—and, as a result, her attendance—as negative because of "drama" with other girls. After following through on the counseling that was recommended by her counselor, Anna shared that program helped her better relate to her peers:

> It was good. Yeah, I was fine. Now I'm starting to go to school and all the drama thing, it's better. Yeah, they just went away and random girl issues on my end. My attitude changed. It's good. It's positive now, not too rude to them. I was rude before. It was just the girl issues. I disliked everyone. I didn't want to be surrounded by people. It was just me. I think the program, the counseling, and the counselors changed me.

While the challenging situation and "drama" may have not changed or dissipated, Anna's attitude and outlook on the issues with her peers changed. Indeed, counseling helped some students to self-regulate and be more self-aware, particularly when it came to relating to peers in

negative situations. As such, positive relationships and psychosocial assets were products of the partnership program.

Families Supporting Student Attendance

Another external asset that the program impacted was support to families, although only two participants mentioned it. The program's intent was to guide families to support students to make positive choices and be engaged in school. Findings suggested that the program had a marginal impact on students' families. One student, Mark, stated, "In December they gave her [my mother] a gift card. And my dad was, like, for a while, he wasn't working. So they helped him get unemployment," which supported the student and family long-term.

Supporting families to meet basic needs also impacted families to support students with school attendance. Another student, William, shared how supporting with basic needs was helpful:

> Programs, they are really helpful. Around Christmastime my mom did go down there to one of the programs and they helped with getting help for Christmas presents for my brothers and sisters. That helped. I believe they got school supplies from over there. They're helpful. They got all the different programs if she needs help with school and different things. I like it.

William highlighted the support the program gave financially and with school supplies. School supplies help students to feel more engaged in school because they have the materials needed to study in the classroom. Also, not only did this student receive supplies, but his brothers and sisters also received support. Once families feel supported and can meet the needs of their children—with food, clothing, supplies—they can focus on other aspects of their lives, such as supporting children's education.

In addition to the financial support and basic supplies that families were offered through this partnership program, students' parents also were involved with keeping students accountable. Mark, for example, perceived the impact of the program on his parents:

> And, like, they would tell my dad or my parents. Like, my mom or dad, and they would tell my probation officer and my probation officer would tell my parents, because they would have a meeting each month. They were in contact with my counselor that goes to my house each Saturday, and they would keep in contact with him, and with my other counselor that I would see by what they called Program FamilySource.

For this student, the program educated and communicated with his parents to keep them well-informed of their son's progress. The communication between the counselor and his parents allowed Mark's parents to hold him accountable for his behavior, attendance, and overall academics. A system of communication and accountability between the home and school was developed.

After receiving program services and interventions, students shared how the program impacted their individual psychosocial, emotional outlook, positive adult relationships, and family supports. As a result of these impacts, participants expressed that the program helped them to engage in positive behaviors in addition to attending school regularly. I discuss these behaviors in the next section.

Engagement in Positive Behaviors

Students in the program said they began to engage in more positive and fewer risky behaviors, perhaps because they were able to recognize the risks and consequences of what they were doing. Elena, for instance, shared her experience with ending her drug use:

> I stopped using drugs and began concentrating more in school. And I prefer now to go and be on time and attend every day to school so I can do better. Yeah, because after I went to the program, yeah, I did change a lot. I see myself more positive than before. I was not really giving everything. I was just doing it because there's nothing else to do. But after the program, I really see that I really need to go to school and be responsible.

Elena correlated the end of her drug use with concentrating in school and attending more often. She stated she preferred to go to school because she stopped using drugs. The program supported her goal-setting, sense of responsibility, and self-confidence—all recurrent themes highlighted in earlier sections. Because these aspects of herself shifted, she was able to find the self-control to stop using drugs and ultimately attend school every day.

In addition to ending drug use, another student, Dianna, who was referred to the PSA counselor for fighting with a peer, described how the program helped her engage in positive behaviors with her peers: "I stopped having problems with people, I started behaving. I remembered that if I don't go to class then I will have to go to juvenile camp. And I didn't want to be with the other bad kids." The experience with the service intervention itself—bootcamp, and hearing descriptions of juvenile hall and camp—became motivating factors to positively behave. Dianna alluded to the general change in her behavior, but she also articulated that she "started behaving." She did not view herself as a "bad kid." She had made the positive change to transform her outlook and perspective.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I presented both quantitative and qualitative findings from the study. Quantitative data analysis results revealed no significant differences between mean attendance rates for students who engaged in intervention recommendations and students who did not engage across any intervention collectively and separately. However, because of the lack of reliability of data, the findings are inconclusive. Qualitative data from student interviews suggest a reason for this similarity—specifically, similar attendance rates may be due to the initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor. In interviews, students who did and did not engage in the interventions shared that the interventions, including the initial intake assessment, impacted their

views of themselves, their goals, and their education. As a result, they indicated that their attendance improved.

The quantitative analysis revealed that students were mostly referred to the diversion program for possession of marijuana and battery. Students were referred to interventions such as drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services, and other services that included anger management classes and tutoring. Sixty-four percent of students were given one service referral recommendation, most often for drug counseling services. Over 65% of students who were referred to an intervention engaged in the recommended service referrals. Sixty-nine percent of students, who participated in the program by meeting with a PSA counselor, regardless of engagement in services, were not chronically absent.

According to students, the partnership program most influenced their internal, individual psychosocial assets, such as self-regulation, positive self-identity and sense of opportunity. Even for students who only participated in the intake process and did not follow through on referral recommendations, there was still a perceived positive effect. Before being referred to the diversion program to meet with a PSA counselor, students described their attendance as poor because they were "lazy" or because they preferred to "ditch" school. Upon further examination, it became evident that these terms were used to mask students' avoidance of difficult situations, such as negative experiences with teachers or difficult coursework. The program gave students a sense of urgency to change themselves. Students learned to set goals, be more responsible, have self-confidence, and utilize anger management skills.

Although difficult situations did not disappear, students did not perceive or avoid the challenges as they had prior to the program. Instead, they learned to deal with and overcome the situations. Students dealt with difficult situations by using anger management skills or focusing

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on their goals for the future. The program's strongest impact was on students' psychosocial assets; there was minimal impact on external assets such as family support. Types of intervention recommendations included drug counseling, individual counseling, youth development services, and other services, such as anger management and recreational programs. Students stated that these changes positively influenced their school attendance.

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION

In this mixed methods study, I explored the impact of a partnership program between a school district and city on school attendance as an indicator of academic achievement for students referred through a juvenile diversion program. The focus was on attendance since it is the single best predictor of whether a student will graduate from high school or drop out (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Bruner et al., 2011; Hammond et al., 2007). In a parallel process, I conducted independent samples *t*-tests to answer four guiding research questions:

1. What types of interventions are students referred to in a school district–city partnership?

2. To what extent do students in a school district–city partnership actually participate in recommended interventions?

3. What specific school district–city partnership interventions are identified to support students' attendance?

4. How do students describe the impact of the school district–city partnership program on their school attendance?

I focused on students between the ages of 13 and 17, comparing students who engaged in intervention recommendations and students who did not. I also interviewed students to discover their perceptions of how the partnership program's interventions impacted their school engagement.

In this chapter, I summarize key findings and analyze them collectively. Further, I suggest implications of the findings and present the limitations and the value of the study for various groups, including school districts, juvenile justice systems, community agencies, school police, and support personnel such as counselors. I then discuss recommendations for further

research. Finally, I offer concluding thoughts and reflections on how a juvenile diversion program can support academic achievement by offering a non-punitive approach for youth.

Highlights of the Findings: Reexamining a Theory of Change

As described in previous chapters, FSPP presents a theory of change by which it hopes to produce positive academic outcomes for students through referral to and engagement with service interventions (Figure 2). After a student is caught committing a minor law violation—as described in the diversion program's infraction matrix (Appendix A)—the student and parent meet with a PSA counselor. During the initial intake assessment, the counselor conducts a needs assessment, discussing reasons for and root causes of the behaviors. During this initial intake, the PSA counselor also discusses current academic progress, reviewing attendance, current grades, and progress to graduation, as well as motivations and feelings. With recommendations to service referral interventions that target root causes of behaviors, the program aims to improve educational outcomes, such as school attendance and grades, which will then lead to high school graduation. One of the main purposes is to decrease delinquent behavior because offending behaviors, such as theft, vandalism, and substance abuse, are predictive factors to absenteeism (Baker et al., 2001; Henry & Huizinga, 2007a; Teasley, 2004). As I describe in this section, the results from this study offer an important revision to this theory of change. Moreover, the results from the quantitative data initially appear to contradict the qualitative findings. However, I offer an explanation for the opposing results.

There was no significant difference of attendance rates between students who engaged in the service referral recommendations and students who did not. Although there were differences in mean attendance rates for the two groups (Table 21), when testing for statistical significance with both the independent samples t-tests, all p values were greater than 05. These results were

surprising because I had hypothesized that engagement in service interventions would make a positive difference in attendance rates for students who followed through. Additionally, as discussed in the program's theory of change, engagement in service referral interventions should lead to positive behaviors. Due to limitations of the data, which is later discussed, it cannot be concluded that engagement in services leads to positive or negative attendance. Although the difference in attendance rates was not statistically significant, when analyzing the number of students by chronic absenteeism rates (91% attendance or less), only 31% were chronically absent while 69% were not chronically absent, regardless of whether they engaged in services.

Table 21

Mean Student Attendance Rates, by Engagement and Service Intervention (N=99)

Intervention	Engaged	Not engaged	Difference in attendance
Drug counseling	91.62% (n = 18)	87.73% (n = 12)	3.89
Individual counseling	88.14% (n = 21)	90.03% (n = 28)	-1.89
Youth development	84.98% (n = 21)	84.77% (n = 15)	0.21
Other	90.75% (n = 11)	83.94% (n = 22)	6.81

The qualitative findings offer an additional explanation. Regardless of whether or not students engaged in the service referral recommendations, they described their experiences in the program as overwhelmingly positive. Students shared that the program impacted their self-regulation, positive self-identity, and sense of opportunity and urgency, thus impacting their attendance. Through the 40 Developmental Assets framework, these impacts are examples of internal assets, such as achievement motivation, responsibility, planning, and decision making (Benson & Leffert, 2001). The program had a stronger impact on students' internal assets—such as commitment to learning and positive identity—than on external assets. (Benson & Leffert, 2001; Benson et al., 2011b).

Though nine student interviewees reported that they engaged in the service recommendations and eight students reported that they did not, all of the students who were interviewed stated that the program positively impacted their lives and their school attendance. As such, the results suggest that the initial intake assessment itself with the PSA counselor, along with the process of coming in contact with law enforcement and being referred to the program, impacted students' psychosocial assets.

One student who did not follow through or engage in the recommendation explained that the PSA counselor "was letting me know enough to have that in my mind, to do this, keep good grades, because teachers want me to get good grades so I can come back to school." This student highlighted the idea that during the initial intake and counseling interaction, he was able to gain a deeper understanding. He developed a sense of responsibility and urgency to improve his grades and attendance—an example of achievement motivation, an internal asset. Another student who followed through on the recommended service intervention expressed, "It made me realize whether I succeed or fail in life is going to be on me." This is another example of an internal asset of a youth taking responsibility for their actions (Benson & Leffert, 2001).

These results may help to explain the lack of significant difference in attendance rates between those who engaged and did not engage across all interventions. The initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor may have had a larger impact than initially hypothesized. As such, I offer an addition to the original theory of change (Figure 7). The revised theory of change includes dotted arrows that point directly from the initial intake assessment to students' psychosocial aspects. Although the interaction with the school police officer may also effect change in attitude towards school, it was explicitly stated by a few of the students that the interaction with the PSA counselor, not necessarily with school police, caused a shift in thinking

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and behaviors. The initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor should be viewed as an intervention to support student attendance, rather than as an ancillary intervention.

Over 66% of students who were referred to one or more service interventions engaged and participated in. Prior to this study, there was no hypothesis for the number of students who engaged or did not engage in the recommended interventions. Although it is not openly advertised by the counselors, it is not a requirement, per the program's protocol and policy, to attend and follow through on referral recommendations. Students who engage do so willingly and are not punitively forced to participate (although these students may be forced by their parents to attend). Part of the reason for this engagement may be the congruence of the reasons for referral and the recommendations. During the initial intake assessment, PSA counselors use their counseling skills to identify the most appropriate interventions to address the issues the student is facing. As discussed, students are referred to interventions that complement the reason for their referral. Because the most common reasons for referral are possession of marijuana and battery on school grounds, most students are referred to drug counseling and individual counseling.

Root causes of student behaviors may relate to challenging or difficult situations the student is facing at home or in school. Because of the program, it appears there is a shift from feeling too "lazy" to go to school to a sense of urgency to achieve goals through school engagement. After going through the program, even if solely through the initial intake assessment with the PSA counselor, students shared that they shifted their way of thinking. One student stated, "I just had a feeling that I know I want to do good and stop procrastinating on that." Students frequently used the term "lazy" to cover up what situations they felt were difficult.

They viewed various aspects of school as difficult, such as challenging classes or negative situations with adults on campus or with peers.

The program supported the improvement of school attendance by changing students' perspectives about themselves and their future goals; while difficult situations did not change, students themselves changed their attitudes and behaviors. "Getting caught" by school police and being sent to a community agency and meeting with a PSA counselor for initial intake assessment, along with being referred and following through on interventions, helped students to see the consequences and reality of their actions. Some may never have before been caught or gotten into trouble with law enforcement and sent to a program; the process and the interventions shook them enough to shift their thinking and perspectives to feel an urgency to change direction. Students realized that if they continued participating in these types of behaviors—drugs, vandalism, truancy, etc.—they would not reach their goals or be successful in life. The program made things "real" for them. A new transformative perspective helped students to both face and deal with challenges, even though the external situations did not change.

While there were monumental shifts in students' thinking about their internal assets, the partnership program had a marginal impact on external assets, such as increasing students' connections with family support, parent involvement in schooling, positive peer influence, and a caring neighborhood. Though the program intended to affect external assets, student interviews minimally reflected them. Some findings, however, indicated that the program did provide an external asset of "other adult relationships," when students described the relationships they built with their counselors. Through the 40 Developmental Assets and ecological systems model approach to student academic success, attendance is optimally influenced when the individual,

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, POSITIVE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, GRADES

ENGAGEMENT IN POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

Student does not engage in risky or delinquent behaviors (ditch, fight, use drugs or alcohol)

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Student develops positive relationships with adults (e.g., counselor, therapist, teacher) and peers

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Student develops positive self-identity, sense of opportunity, self-management; student's attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school improve

FAMILY SUPPORTS

Student's family is supported (e.g., basic needs, parenting support) to support student

EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS; STUDENT/PARENT FOLLOWS THROUGH AND ENGAGES IN SERVICE REFERRAL(S)

STUDENT PARTICIPATES IN INTAKE ASSESSMENT WITH PSA COUNSELOR

Student referred by school police for minor law violation

Assumptions: Services are evidence-based and are supportive; parents are supportive of students following through; PSA counselors have available resources to refer students to; schools are receptive to students making change.

Figure 7. Revised theory of change for FamilySource Partnership Program.

school, family, and community are all involved and affected. Instead, however, this program, most impacted students' internal assets.

Implications

The LASPD Diversion Referral Program provides an alternative to citations for students while also linking them with FSPP services that can improve academic outcomes as well as attendance. Students in high poverty, urban communities have lower school attendance rates, which leads to lower graduation rates (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Baker et al., 2003; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Mac Iver & Messel, 2012). Absenteeism predicts delinquent behavior, and vice versa; it is therefore critical to intervene before students get caught in the juvenile justice system. This program addresses the needs of students who commit minor law offenses by offering support rather than punishment. The support to students allows for a positive paradigm shift in their thinking about themselves.

There is evidence that FSPP builds and supports students' internal assets from the 40 Developmental Assets framework, such as a commitment to learning (i.e., achievement motivation, school engagement), social competencies (i.e., resistance skills, planning and decision making, interpersonal competence), and positive identity (i.e., personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose; Search Institute, 2016). However, there is a gap in the program's support of building external assets, such as family support, positive adult relationships, boundaries, and expectations. Programs such as this should look at strengthening interventions that focus on supporting external assets, such as the family and community systems or find more ways to promote engagement in services so that they youth have the opportunity to build the external assets.

Overall, treatment models that support students have a strong influence on their individual, internal assets. Compared to punitive approaches, which historically have not decreased recidivism (Lipsey et al., 2010), support systems where school districts, community partners, the city, and law enforcement collaborate appear to have promising results. Collaborative partnerships that support rather than punish students can bring entire communities together to intervene (Fujimoto, Garcia, & Medina, 2013). This study of a city–district collaboration confirms previous findings that partnerships that support rather than punish are most effective.

It is important to note that support systems that aim to understand the root causes of one's behavior may be more impactful on students, even if the support is just a one-time intervention. The one-time initial intake assessment at the FSPP and possibly the process of being referred had more power and impact on students than initially hypothesized. Regardless of engagement in services, 69% of students in the quantitative sample were not chronically absent and 16 out of 17 students in the qualitative sample perceived their attendance to have improved after the program. Single interactions with students were meaningful, particularly in the context of giving students a second chance to make a change when they initially made a mistake. More emphasis should be put on what that interaction looks like and the types of things that can be shared. Having a counselor who is a school district employee located in a community agency brings two entities together, effectively creating a school–community partnership. The school district employee has the background and expertise of the educational system and understanding of grades, attendance, and the path towards graduation; community agencies provide the direct services and programs needed to support students. Situated outside of the school setting and able to directly refer

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students to specific interventions at their location, PSA counselors can immediately refer and connect students and families to services.

Students who, for whatever reason, are involved in delinquent behaviors and are caught can still make positive changes, despite making unlawful decisions. School staff, law enforcement, community agencies, and society as a whole should be cautious of labeling all youth who commit minor law violations with terms such as juvenile delinquents, thugs, potheads, gangsters, hoodlums, druggies, etc. Moreover, sending youth directly through the juvenile justice pipeline does not give them an opportunity to make a change. Programs like the LASPD Diversion Referral Program and FSPP give youth who commit minor law violations a chance to make a positive change in their lives and steer themselves in another direction towards education and school achievement. If programs such as these have a stronger impact on students' families and helping to make positive relationships in actual school settings, the influence on school attendance may be even stronger.

Limitations

Although this study presented interesting findings that answered the research questions, several limitations of the investigation must be pointed out. First, with both the quantitative and qualitative methods, the sample size was very small. Data for approximately 33% of the student population of the diversion program were analyzed, and only 17 students were interviewed individually. This sample size limits the ability to generalize across all students because students in the sample may not be representative of the entire group. The small sample size for the quantitative methods may have likewise impacted the statistical tests and their output, particularly the assumptions of normality. Because the tests of engagement in the different service referrals were split by categories, the sample sizes for those interventions yielded even

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smaller groups, with outliers having stronger effects. Sample sizes also varied throughout because of missing data.

In addition, data for students' engagement were submitted by counselors, and not all counselors submitted the results—10 of the 13 counselors did so. There was also an overrepresentation of students from one of FamilySource Centers, and missing variables for gender, attendance rates, etc., for approximately 25 students resulted because those students had withdrawn from the school district and were therefore no longer in the data system. Finally, students and parents who agreed to participate in the interviews may have not been random; specifically, they may have already had a positive affinity to the program.

In terms of reliability, there was variability in the term "engagement." Engagement was defined as following through on one or more sessions of a recommended intervention. Some students may have attended only one session while others may have completed all of the recommended sessions. Also, the interventions were variable in nature (e.g., distance from home, terms of involvement, etc.).

Students also varied in when they had their initial intake assessments. While most participated in intake in the 2014–2015 school year, some participated as late as October 2015. Attendance rates were gathered through December 2015. As a result, students had between two and 16 months between the initial intake and when attendance rates where gathered. These variations have likely affected the study's outcomes. For instance, the program may have had more impact for students who had engaged in a service for a longer amount of time.

The time elapsed between intake and the study interview creates another limitation. I asked students to recall what happened with the incident, initial intake, and the service referral. It may have been over a year for some and for others just a few months, and they may have had

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selective memory in their recollections. Also, students may have reacted differently to the interview itself; for example, some could have exaggerated their reactions by making them more significant than they actually were.

Another limitation to the study is that I could not gather attendance data prior to *and* following the actual intake assessment. District data during the 2014–2015 school year were reported by the district to be unreliable, and so the study focused on comparing groups of students with different levels of engagement. Without pre- and post-intervention data on attendance rates, I was unable to explore actual improvements in attendance rates.

While engagement in the service interventions did not result in the intended outcomes, results point to the initial intake process as being more impactful than initially thought. However, there is another possibility for the lack of statistical difference in attendance rates—the service interventions did not address the root causes of students' behaviors and did not support positive student outcomes such as attendance. A counterfactual analysis, or a comparison among the groups who engaged, did not engage, and were never referred to a service intervention, may have revealed different results. Among the sample that was analyzed, only three students were not referred to an intervention. Another group that was not analyzed comprised students who were never referred to the PSA counselor but who were caught committing minor law violations. Such counterfactual groups would help to affirm or deny the argument that PSA counselors interactions are, in fact, impactful.

Finally, as the administrator who oversees the program being studied, I had to be aware of my own biases of wanting to find the results that would promote the positive nature of the interventions. However, triangulation of methods of interviewing students and using quantitative

data helped to mitigate this limitation. As the researcher, I constantly checked my bias and focused my questions on trying to understand student perspectives.

<div align="center">**Value of the Study to Various Groups**</div>

School Districts

The study shows evidence of a promising partnership that diverts students away from the juvenile justice system and supports them towards making positive changes. Positive changes not only support reduction of recidivism, as studies have shown, but they also impact educational outcomes such as attendance, as the current study indicates. Instead of utilizing school law enforcement to cite students for minor law violations, this diversion program can be implemented district-wide as an alternative. Although schools and administrators may be accustomed to utilizing punitive approaches to discipline due to "zero tolerance" policies, there is an opportunity to implement programs that support students and get to the root cause of behaviors. In addition, schools and school districts should seriously look into investing funds for support personnel who are skilled in conducting needs assessments and providing effective counseling interventions. There is also value in partnering with community agencies and law enforcement to develop a continuum of services and information that can be shared without bureaucracy and barriers for students and families to receive services.

Support Personnel

For support personnel, this study shows how meaningful a single interaction can be for students and families. A needs assessment during an initial intake may at first seem like an ancillary service, but it can be a powerful intervention. The assessment should be formatted in a way that allows students, parents, and the counselor to have open communication and an avenue to provide counseling intervention. This interaction is an opportunity to make an impact on

students' perspectives about themselves and their futures. Support personnel should remember the value and power in the words that they share, particularly with youth. In addition, it is important that during an initial assessment, time and effort be taken to review academic records and discuss the school district's academic and behavioral expectations for students.

Juvenile Justice Systems

In juvenile justice systems, treatment-focused interventions are starting to gain momentum with evidence-based studies (Lipsey et al., 2010). What the current study has to offer is the significance of juvenile justice systems working so closely with school districts. There is power in the collaboration and partnership of juvenile justice systems and the educational system. Because the goal is to ensure students graduate from school and stay away from delinquent behaviors, it is imperative that the partnership be built and continue to provide meaningful ways to support students and families.

Community Agencies

It is essential for community agencies to partner closely with the educational system to provide a seamless continuum of services, particularly for students with the highest needs. Community agencies that include school district support staff, such as PSA counselors, can bridge gaps and allow students and families to access service interventions and also ensure that school staff can help families navigate both systems.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement personnel are the initial contact point when a student has committed a minor law infraction. With partnerships such as the one described here, there is an opportunity to explain to students that they are being given a second chance and there is the possibility of making a positive change. Law enforcement agencies should look into developing similar

diversion programs that closely partner with community agencies and school districts to help students improve their educational outcomes.

Future Research

This mixed methods study provided an opportunity to understand how a school district, a school district police department, and city-funded community agencies can work together to support students and improve educational outcomes. For students being diverted away from the juvenile justice system through this program, it is worthwhile to continue exploring the effects. While there are findings that support the promise of such a model, further research is needed to fully understand the impact of the partnership on attendance and academic achievement measures and to provide evidence-based practices.

A study examining pre- and post-intervention data would provide an opportunity to see the difference in attendance rates and test whether the difference is statistically significant. In that same study, a larger sample, preferably the whole population, would be analyzed, and a longitudinal study following students through twelfth grade and through graduation would be beneficial. Another research aspect would be to also define the level of engagement by initial engagement, follow through. and completion of the service referral recommendations. Defining the time lapse between the initial intake assessment and the time that the data are extracted is an important variable in the findings.

Further research should also look into the characteristics of who benefits most from the program's services. For instance, it is important to understand for which students the program is most effective (first-time or repeat offenders), what types of offenses students are referred for, what grade level or age student is most often referred, and what the discipline histories of

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referred students look like. These characteristics are meaningful in understanding who may value the intervention most.

Additionally, understanding parents' perspectives of their children would help to triangulate findings further. Parents would be able to share any observed changes in their children and how the program impacted them. It would also be useful to explore how the program can support parents to support students. Likewise, it is important to gain insight from parents about any impacts they themselves received, and how those effects reinforce attendance or education more generally.

The final recommendation for further research is to gain a deeper understanding of the services and interventions. For instance, is important to explore the initial contacts between students and school police or the PSA counselor. Questions to be asked in this further research relate to the types of discussions around education and educational goals. For example, what styles do the counselors have and are they different? There is currently a defined assessment form that outlines questions to ask, but with different counselors, different styles emerge. It would be interesting to look at the differences that exist and to explore whether they make a difference.

Recommendations for Practice

I recommend that Diversion Referral Program and the FSPP continue to be implemented in LAUSD because of its promise to impact students' outlooks and perceptions of themselves. Other school districts should begin to look at this model and draw upon best practices and implement similar processes to stop youth from entering the juvenile justice system. I also recommend continued funding for both the program—especially for support personnel, such as PSA counselors—and further research.

It is also important to ensure best practices are being shared among PSA counselors. This would include sharing how to make the assessment and the one-time intervention for students meaningful. Because there is power in the initial contact point, further professional development through pupil services and Los Angeles School Police department is also warranted.

Collaboration and partnership is another key to making programs like this successful. In this type of partnership, a program like FSPP would not exist without the collaborative forces that bring its services to fruition. The co-location of the school district's PSA counselor makes this partnership unique. In addition, because research on the 40 Developmental Assets focuses on community involvement and the significance of ensuring communities are committed to the positive developmental asset framework (Benson, 2002, 2003), continued community partnership and involvement should be seen as a viable intervention. Benson (2003) called for action from community stakeholders to create an "asset-building community" where a collective purpose promotes the development assets, protective factors, and strengths of youth. Through multisector collaborations and partnerships, community-based organizations can continue to build the capacity of youth by promoting assets together.

Final Thoughts

This mixed methods study, though rigorous, can be viewed as a precursor to additional studies that will help to shed more light on evidence-based practices. In the meantime, these findings indicate that the program provides an alternative to citation of minor offenders. All students, regardless of their characteristics and the choices they make, are capable of achieving the school district's goal of being college- and career-ready. Within our institutions, we have the opportunity to either oppress or encourage. American education is argued to be the fundamental method of social progress and reform in our society (Dewey, 1935). In the creed written almost a

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century ago, Dewey (1935) declared that the purpose of education is to empower individuals to meet their fullest capacities and strengths so that they can be of the greatest service to others.

How we view our youth in schools, the community, and the home affects how we support them. If we believe that all students will succeed, we should support them by providing the interventions that get to the root cause of their behaviors and address those barriers to achievement head on. And instead of utilizing a deficit model, a shift towards a strengths-based, asset-building, protective factors framework can transform students (Scales et al., 2006). Programs should not be limited to a single school district but should be implemented county-, state-, and nation-wide in order to plug the school-to-prison pipeline.

With macro interventions and policies that address and support students on a broad scale, it is essential that each individual look on a micro level at how we interact with our youth. Despite choices that individual students may make, a single interaction is powerful enough to help them change direction positively, in order to be more engaged in their education. Building positive, supportive relationships and connections are key to making students feel important. Being reflective about how we think about and communicate with students is an important first step toward making a positive difference.

Our youth are intuitive and can assess our thoughts and actions. Many of us say we believe that all students can achieve, but that belief may not pertain to students who smoke marijuana, get into fights, steal, and vandalize—in other words, those who become "juvenile delinquents." In order to avert the school-to-prison pipeline, the LASPD Diversion Referral Program, in partnership with the community, school district, and city through FSPP, has the potential to change students' lives and futures (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012; Fujimoto

et al., 2013). If a punitive criminalization approach does not work to improve outcomes, alternatives and second chances can make the difference for our youth.

In order to support the academic success of students, we need a model that enables families, schools, communities, agencies, businesses, and governments to build a "collective impact" to encourage wellness, address barriers to achievement, and participate to increase internal and external assets. Keeping with the integrity of the idea that students come first, entities must collectively realize that student wellness and psychosocial well-being precede learning and academic success. Graduation rates are low and dropout rates are high; the days of working in isolation and finger-pointing must be gone. Positive change can only be made when it is done together in partnership.

APPENDIX A:

LASPD Diversion Referral Matrix

Violation	Code Section	Action Taken by LASPD (Ages 13-17)	Education Code Section	MiSiS Reason Code
Possession of tobacco and/or tobacco paraphernalia	308(b) P.C.	Administrative Referral unless directed otherwise by LASPD supervisor	Possessed or used tobacco. E.C. 48900(h); 48915(e)	3.6
Theft of property loss less than $50 (District property)	490.1(a) P.C.	Administrative Referral unless directed otherwise by LASPD supervisor	Stole or attempted to steal school or private property. E.C. 48900(g); 48915 (e)	3.5
Trespassing	602.8 P.C. and related municipal/county code violations	Administrative Referral unless directed otherwise by LASPD supervisor	Truancy during school hours. E.C. 48260 (a)	
Possession of marijuana less than 1 ounce (only if not found smoking)	11357(b) H&S 11357(e) H&S	Administrative Referral OR Diversion Referral	Marijuana possession for 1st offense of < 1 oz. E.C. 48900(c); 48915(b)	3.2
Fighting between students	415(1) P.C. 415.5 (a) P.C.	Administrative Referral OR Diversion Referral	Caused physical injury to another person. Attempted to cause physical injury to another person. Threatened to cause physical injury to another person. E.C. 48900(a)(1); 48915(b)	3.1a 3.1b 3.1c
Minor in possession of alcohol	25662(a) B&P	Administrative Referral OR Diversion Referral	Marijuana possession for 1st offense of <1 oz., or alcohol E.C. 48900(c); 48915 (b)	3.2
Vandalism less than $400 damage (District property)	594(a) (1) P.C. 594(a) (2) P.C. 594(a) (3) P.C. 594.1(e)(1) P.C.	Administrative Referral OR Diversion Referral	Caused or attempted to cause damage to school or private property. E.C. 48900(f); 48915(e)	3.4
Battery (see exceptions applicable to Battery diversion only)	242 & 243.2(a) P.C.	Diversion Referral or per discretion of officer, Administrative Referral	Willful use of force/violence not in self-defense. E.C. 48900(a)(2); 48915(b)	3.16

For students between the ages of 13-17, the following applies:

▇ School-site Administrative Referral

▇ School-site Administrative Referral or Diversion Referral per LASPD Guidelines

▇ Diversion Referral or School-site Administrative Referral unless exceptions exist

APPENDIX B:

Student Interview Protocol

1.) What services have you participated in/are you participating in with the FamilySource Center?

2.) How would you describe your attitude toward going to school before going to the FamilySource Center? Why?

3.) How would you describe your attitude toward going to school after going to the FamilySource Center? Why?

4.) How would you describe your school attendance before going to the FamilySource Center? Why was this the case?

5.) How would you describe your school attendance now? If there is a change what caused it?

6.) Do you think any intervention services helped you do better in school?
   a. If yes, what services helped you? In what ways did they help you?
   b. If no, why not?

7.) Do you feel any intervention services affected your school attendance?
   a. If yes, which ones? In what ways did the services affect your attendance?
   b. If no, why not?

8.) Do you feel like the intervention services impacted you or your family in any other ways?
   a. If yes, how?
   b. If no, why not?

9.) Please share any other thoughts you have about the FamilySource services and how they have affected you.

SPSS Output of Distribution of Students in the Sample by FamilySource Center

FSC

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	FSC #1	13	9.8	9.8	9.8
	FSC #2	4	3.0	3.0	12.9
	FSC #3	15	11.4	11.4	24.2
	FSC #4	24	18.2	18.2	42.4
	FSC #5	12	9.1	9.1	51.5
	FSC #6	38	28.8	28.8	80.3
	FSC #7	13	9.8	9.8	90.2
	FSC #8	4	3.0	3.0	93.2
	FSC #9	7	5.3	5.3	98.5
	FSC #10	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	132	100.0	100.0	

SPSS Output of Engagement in Intervention by Reason for Referral/Offense

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Offense * TotalEng	129	97.7%	3	2.3%	132	100.0%

Offense * TotalEng Crosstabulation

			TotalEng		Total
			Not Engaged	Engaged	
Offense	.00	Count	3	6	9
		% within Offense	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%
	Possession of Marijuana	Count	20	37	57
		% within Offense	35.1%	64.9%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	46.5%	43.0%	44.2%
	Possession of Tobacco	Count	0	8	8
		% within Offense	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	0.0%	9.3%	6.2%
	Possession of Alcohol	Count	2	4	6
		% within Offense	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%
	Battery on School Grounds	Count	8	25	33
		% within Offense	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	18.6%	29.1%	25.6%
	Vandalism	Count	9	5	14
		% within Offense	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	20.9%	5.8%	10.9%
	Theft	Count	1	1	2
		% within Offense	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	2.3%	1.2%	1.6%
Total		Count	43	86	129
		% within Offense	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within TotalEng	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX E:

SPSS Output for Cross Tabulation between Chronic Absenteeism

and Level of Engagement

TotalEng * ChronicAbsEngagement Crosstabulation

			ChronicAbsEngagement			
			Not Chronically Absent	Chronically Absent	Missing Attendance Data	Total
TotalEng	Not Engaged	Count	21	11	11	43
		% within TotalEng	48.8%	25.6%	25.6%	100.0%
		% within ChronicAbsEngagement	31.8%	36.7%	33.3%	33.3%
	Engaged	Count	45	19	22	86
		% within TotalEng	52.3%	22.1%	25.6%	100.0%
		% within ChronicAbsEngagement	68.2%	63.3%	66.7%	66.7%
Total		Count	66	30	33	129
		% within TotalEng	51.2%	23.3%	25.6%	100.0%
		% within ChronicAbsEngagement	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX F:

SPSS Output for Test of Normality between Attendance Rate and Independent Variables

(Engagement in Services)

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	DrugRefEng	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
AttRate	Referred and Not Engaged	.236	12	.064	.746	12	.002
	Referred and Engaged	.277	18	.001	.719	18	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	IndCounRefEng	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
AttRate	Referred and Not Engaged	.270	28	.000	.730	28	.000
	Referred and Engaged	.291	21	.000	.729	21	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	YouthDevRefEng	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
AttRate	Referred and Not Engaged	.319	15	.000	.724	15	.000
	Referred and Engaged	.306	21	.000	.748	21	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	OtherRefEng	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
AttRate	Referred and Not Engaged	.269	22	.000	.744	22	.000
	Referred and Engaged	.369	11	.000	.546	11	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

APPENDIX G:

Homogeneity of Variance SPSS Test Output

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: AttRate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	738.711[a]	2	369.356	.924	.408
Intercept	59504.122	1	59504.122	148.855	.000
OtherRefEng * Offense	738.711	2	369.356	.924	.408
Error	11992.394	30	399.746		
Total	257990.719	33			
Corrected Total	12731.106	32			

a. R Squared = .058 (Adjusted R Squared = -.005)

Test of Homogeneity of Variance (Drug Coun)

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
AttRate	Based on Mean	.449	1	28	.508
	Based on Median	.391	1	28	.537
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.391	1	26.423	.537
	Based on trimmed mean	.362	1	28	.552

Test of Homogeneity of Variance (Ind)

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
AttRate	Based on Mean	.000	1	47	.984
	Based on Median	.001	1	47	.973
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.001	1	46.987	.973
	Based on trimmed mean	.002	1	47	.965

Test of Homogeneity of Variance (YouthDev)

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
AttRate	Based on Mean	.072	1	34	.790
	Based on Median	.006	1	34	.937
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.006	1	33.753	.937
	Based on trimmed mean	.070	1	34	.793

Test of Homogeneity of Variance (Other)

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
AttRate	Based on Mean	.822	1	31	.372
	Based on Median	.503	1	31	.483
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.503	1	30.999	.483
	Based on trimmed mean	1.107	1	31	.301

Independent Samples *t*-test SPSS Output for All Interventions

TotalEng

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Engaged	43	32.6	33.3	33.3
	Engaged	86	65.2	66.7	100.0
	Total	129	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	3	2.3		
Total		132	100.0		

Group Statistics

	TotalEng	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AttRate	Engaged	64	89.0858	15.14688	1.89336
	Not Engaged	32	88.8485	15.76827	2.78746

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AttRate	Equal variances assumed	.017	.898	.071	94	.943	.23728	3.32436	-6.36332	6.83789
	Equal variances not assumed			.070	59.927	.944	.23728	3.36968	-6.50325	6.97782

APPENDIX I:

Independent Samples *t*-test SPSS Output for Drug Counseling

Group Statistics

	DrugRefEng	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AttRate	Referred and Engaged	18	91.6247	11.74289	2.76783
	Referred and Not Engaged	12	87.7308	16.07893	4.64159

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AttRate	Equal variances assumed	.449	.508	.768	28	.449	3.89393	5.07292	-6.49747	14.28533
	Equal variances not assumed			.721	18.685	.480	3.89393	5.40418	-7.43007	15.21794

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Independent Samples *t*-test SPSS Output for Individual Counseling

Group Statistics

	IndCounRefEng	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AttRate	Referred and Engaged	21	88.1370	14.61764	3.18983
	Referred and Not Engaged	28	90.0334	14.00630	2.64694

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AttRate	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	-.460	47	.647	-1.89635	4.11929	-10.18329	6.39060
	Equal variances not assumed			-.457	42.203	.650	-1.89635	4.14504	-10.26017	6.46748

APPENDIX K:

Independent Samples *t*-test SPSS Output for Youth Development Services

Group Statistics

	YouthDevRefEng	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AttRate	Referred and Engaged	21	84.9769	19.38001	4.22907
	Referred and Not Engaged	15	84.7741	20.36179	5.25739

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AttRate	Equal variances assumed	.072	.790	.030	34	.976	.20276	6.69030	-13.39356	13.79908
	Equal variances not assumed			.030	29.371	.976	.20276	6.74723	-13.58931	13.99483

Independent Samples *t*-test SPSS Output for Other Services

Group Statistics

	OtherRefEng	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AttRate	Referred and Engaged	11	90.7520	19.39643	5.84824
	Referred and Not Engaged	22	83.9385	20.27014	4.32161

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means						
								Std. Error Differ1ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	e	Lower	Upper
AttRate	Equal variances assumed	.822	.372	.923	31	.363	6.81352	7.38271	-8.24361	21.87065
	Equal variances not assumed			.937	20.931	.359	6.81352	7.27174	-8.31194	21.93898

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