DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 557 EA 018 303

AUTHOR	deJung, John; Duckworth, Kenneth
TITLE	High School Teachers and Their Students' Attendance. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Oregon Univ., Eugene. Center for Educational Policy and Management.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Mar 86
NOTE	74p.; This report is part of a two-year study, "The Management of Student Absenteeism in the High Schools."
AVAILABLE FROM	Publication Sales, Center for Educational Policy and Management, College of Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403 ($4.00 prepaid; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Attendance Patterns; Attendance Records; *Classroom Environment; *Educational Environment; High Schools; *Secondary School Teachers; Student Characteristics; Tables (Data); Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Influence; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Pacific Northwest

ABSTRACT

Student absenteeism was studied in six high schools: three schools in each of two large school districts in the Pacific Northwest. The data source was grade and absence reports collected over a period of nearly two years. Approximately 50 administrators, over 500 teachers, and 10,000 students contributed data to the project. The analysis goal was to examine differences in the teachers' overall class absence rates as they related to differences in the classes taught, the teaching practices used, and the teachers' personal characteristics. Other variables that might have contributed to the absence rating were also considered. Among these were student ability level, class size, total number of students taught, grades received by students, and time of day. Also the differences between the responses from the low-absence and high-absence groups were measured for the various items on a student attendance questionaire administered to all teachers in the study. Evidence derived from the data demonstrates that teachers are distinguishable with respect to their students' absences and that the subject and students taught are two factors that help determine the student absence rate. More study of classroom factors is needed to provide information for use in reducing absenteeism. (GJ)

High School Teachers and Their Students' Attendance

by
John deJung and Kenneth Duckworth

March 1986

Center for Educational Policy and Management
College of Education
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

The preparation of this final report was made possible through an Institutional Grant awarded by the National Institute of Education to the Center for Educational Policy and Management. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the NIE or the U.S. Department of Education.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This report is one of a series of reports of a two-year study entitled "The Management of Student Absenteeism in the High Schools" supported by the Center for Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon through funding from the National Institute of Education.

Other reports in the series include an examination of variations in high school procedures for managing student attendance (Duckworth and deJung, 1986a) and an investigation of factors influencing individual students' frequency of unexcused absences (Duckworth and deJung, 1986b). The present report focuses on the classroom and on classroom teachers and the role they play in affecting tneir students' attendance.

The study of student absences is an especially difficult one, first because the measurement of absences is typically plagued with inaccuracies and operational diversity, and second because there are myriad variables competing for attention as causative agents. We will report more extensively on the problem of measuring absences in a separate paper (deJung and Duckworth, 1986a). Suffice it to say that we reject the use of the typical fu l-day absence count because it seriously underreports student absences. Therefore, all attendance measures used in this report are derived from the more accurate end-of-term, class-by-class teacher reports of their students' attendance. Also, we do not do we make distinctions between excused and unexcused absences.

The selection of causative agents is perforce an arbitrary one. The study of absences could profitably focus on many diverse contributors: some have roots in the students' homes and neighborhood environments; some are more directly related to the students' prior educational experiences, some lie in the students' particular attitudes, abilities, and ambitions; and some

are more immediately situation-bound, involving particular schools or classes. Our preliminary analyses (deJung and Duckworth, 1985) have revealed not only the huge numbers of class absences that appear to be common to all schools but also the selective nature of absences: students miss some classes more than others. The present report examines what these class absences may have to do with the teacher and his or her classroom management.

Sample Description and Methods of Analysis

We collected data from class and daily attendance reports (principally end-of-term computer printouts) in three high schools in each of two large school districts in the Pacific Northwest. All six schools were four-year high schools with enrollments ranging from 900 to 1,600 students. The data collection period began in the winter term of the 1983-84 school year and ended with the final term of the 1984-85 school year. The three schools from the larger district (District I, which had a total of eleven high schools) were selected because they had moderate to high absence rates. We shall refer to these schools as schools A, B, and C. The three schools from District II included two schools that represented a general school population, Schools D and E, and a university neighborhood school, School F, whose students had higher academic achievements than the other schools. The two school districts differed in that District I was on a quarter schedule (four terms per school y ar) and District II was on a trimester schedule (three terms per school year). Approximately 50 building-level administrators and counselors, over 500 classroom teachers, and some 10,000 students were the source for project data on a term-to-term basis. With the exception of School C, which had a 25 percent minority pupil enrollment (mostly Asian background), all schools had generally low minority populations.

The teacher sample for these analyses comprised all teachers who taught at least four classes in any of the six high schools during at least one complete school term between winter 1984 and spring 1985. Teachers of classes for the handicapped or non-English-speaking students, or of other special classes, were excluded from the sample. The principal source of teacher data was the record of student absences in each teacher's classes each term. These absences were initially recorded as individual student absences for inclusion on end-of-term student report cards. We summed these absences and computed an average number of class periods missed by all students in each class. This measure, referred to as the average absences per class, AB (class), was, in turn, averaged for all classes a teacher taught each term, which provided us with each teacher's overall class absence rate, AB (teacher), for that term. Because our two school districts had different term lengths (typically, 45 days in District I schools and 57 days in District II schools) and because student absences varied considerably for different school terms (always lowest in the fall term), we exercised considerable caution when directly comparing absence rates from different school terms or districts.

School-level effects have also been indicated in our data. Some of our schools consistently reported higher or lower absence rates, a tendency attributable to school-wide factors such as differences in student populations, school attractiveness, and attendance encouragement/enforcement (Duckworth and deJung, 1986a). In order to control for school-level differences, we analyzed the teacher class absence rate in relation to the absence rates of teachers working in the same school. Accordingly, when we compare teachers with high class absence rates to teachers with low class absence rates, our comparison groups are developed within schools. Where warranted by lack of between-school differences (replicability across

schools), combined school data are used to simplify our data presentation.

Our analysis goal was to examine differences in the teachers' overall class absence rates as they related to differences in the classes the teachers taught, the teaching practices they used, and the personal characteristics of the teachers. We analyze the classroom as a unit and consider the relationship of student absenteeism to classes identified by teacher, by subject or department, by period of day, by whether they principally had enrollments of students with high or low ability levels, by the number of students in the class, and by the grades the students received. We relate the data to teacher practices, attributes, and beliefs as teachers reported them to us on questionnaires. Our absentee data source is the set of nearly 1,500 classes taught in each of the six high schools during two consecutive school years. Our teacher sample totaled over 400 teachers who were generally assigned four or five classes a term. In our class analyses we excluded all classes with enrollments of fewer than eleven students. Typically there were 20 to 30 pupils enrolled in each class in our sample.

Our analysis of teacher overall class absence rates followed a number of paths. In reporting our results we first present findings from the various analyses of data from student report card and absence records. Both school districts supplied us with such data at the end of each school term. Our second set of findings primarily refers to analyses made of teacher responses to an Attendance Questionnaire (see Appendix A), which was administered both in the 1983-84 and 1984-85 school years. All of our second set of findings involve groupings of teachers made on the basis of their AB (teacher) measures into low-absence, middle-absence, or high-absence groups.

Our findings are reported in two separate sections. In the first section, we begin with an examination of the AB (teacher) measure itself, its distribution within schools, and its constancy from term to term. We then

report our analyses of differences in class absences among and within departments. We extended this analysis of department differences to comparisons between schools and to constancy from term to term. Both of our analyses of constancy principally involved product moment correlations computed between absence rates for different school terms.

We next compare absences in classes enrolling students of different ability levels. These analyses controlled for teacher effects by comparing the class absence rates, AB (class), of the same teacher teaching classes primarily for students with either higher ability levels or lower ability levels. On the other hand, our examination of absences in classes meeting at different times (periods) during the day cuts across and diffuses teacher differences since all our teachers taught four or more periods each day. The final analyses reported in this first section of findings examine the possible effects of the total number of students the teachers were teaching, class size, and grades. Analyses of these last two variables involved correlations with class absence rates, AB (class), computed separately within each of the school periods.

The second section presents comparisons of teachers grouped within each school into a lower, middle, and upper third on the basis of their overall class absence rate. With the exception of sample descriptions, all comparisons were based on responses made by teachers in these groups on the Absence Questionnaire (see Appendix A) administered in spring 1984 and again ten months later. Responses from these two administrations were combined to describe the percentage of teachers within each class absence grouping choosing different responses to the questionnaire items.

The comparisons of responses of teachers in the low-, middle-, and high-absence groups are presented in four subsections: the first deals with the teacher's description of his or her students; next, with the teacher's

classroom teaching practices; third, with the teacher's attendance monitoring practices; and, finally, with the teacher's more general concerns and beliefs regarding the problem of student absences. Though changes in teacher responses on the second questionnaire administration are described for those items where changes occurred, the principal data presentation in these sections focuses on differences between responses of teachers whose students had much lower class absence rates and the responses of teachers whose students had many more class absences.

We complete our report with a recapitulation of our analyses and a final statement summarizing the distinctions we found (and didn't find) between teachers with low rates of student absences and those with high rates of student absences.

Teacher Classroom Absence Rates

1. Distribution and Term-to-Term Constancy: Our basic description of differences between teachers' class absences is the distribution of the AB (teacher) measures within each of the six schools in our study. These distributions, based on our spring 1984 data, are described in Table 1.

Table 1

	District I			District II		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Number of Teachers	41	46	44	55	57	52
Males	23	28	28	33	38	33
Females	18	18	16	22	19	19
AB (teacher) Average	7.81	6.28	6.54	6.13	5.44	5.68
Standard Deviation	1.76	1.69	1.93	1.59	2.00	1.22
25th Percentile	6.2	5.2	4.8	4.7	4.1	4.8
Median	7.8	6.4	6.5	6.2	5.4	5.9
75th Percentile	9.3	7.2	7.6	7.5	6.3	6.4

The school averages reported in Table 1 varied considerably from

nearly eight absences in every class during a 45-day term for School A to an average of just above five absences in every class during a 57-day term in School E. However, considerable variation was found within all schools, with standard deviations of a third to a fourth of the school's average absence rate. Distributions also tended to be symmetrical around their mean, with medians approximating means and roughly equidistant between the lower and upper quartile of the absence continuum. School F, which had a tighter bunching of teachers with lower class absence rates, was the single exception to this symmetry.

An immediate question concerning the AB (teacher) measure was its constancy from term to term. To what extent was the teacher absence rate "term bound"? Does our classroom data support popular belief that there are teachers repeatedly high or low with respect to their students' class attendance?

Our analysis of constancy began by pairing teacher overall class absence rates for our several terms of data, the five consecutive trimesters for the District II schools and the two available terms for the District I schools.[1] These pairings are summarized as Pearson product moment correlations computed separately for each of the schools. The number of teachers per correlation ranged from 49 to 79 for the District II schools and to as low as 36 for one District I school where we lacked complete teacher identification.

The school means and standard deviations reported for each correlation reveal the considerable changes in school means from term to term, often as large as half a standard deviation unit. This variability of school means, however, reflects school-wide changes rather than changes in the teacher's overall class absence rate relative to other teachers in his or her school. The 21 correlations in Table 2 describe these relative changes

TABLE 2

Correlations Between Average Class Absences for Successive Terms and Successive School Years for Teachers[1] in Six High Schools

	School D			School E			School F		
Successive Terms	M	SD	r	M	SD	r	M	SD	r
Winter '84	6.97	1.42	.67	5.38	1.62	.58	6.12	1.87	.64
Spring '84	6.15	1.57		5.31	2.05		5.81	1.48	
Fall '84	4.52	1.18	.72	4.40	1.38	.69	4.65	1.72	.65
Winter '85	5.45	1.46		5.05	1.76		5.87	1.72	
Winter '85	5.45	1.46	.44	5.05	1.76	.75	5.87	1.72	.71
Spring '85	5.70	1.70		5.11	1.60		5.11	1.51	
Successive Years - Same Term									
Winter '84	6.97	1.42	.57	5.38	1.62	.70	6.12	1.87	.50
Winter '85	5.45	1.46		5.05	1.76		5.87	1.72	
Spring '84	6.15	1.57	.65	5.31	2.05	.57	5.81	1.48	.56
Spring '85	5.70	1.70		5.11	1.60		5.11	1.51	
Successive Years - Different Terms									
Spring '84	6.15	1.57	.53	5.31	2.05	.46	5.81	1.98	.57
Winter '85	5.45	1.46		5.05	1.76		5.87	1.92	
Successive years - Different Terms									
	School A			School B			School C		
4th Quarter 84	7.88	1.78	.46	6.37	1.71	.63	6.60	1.85	.49
3rd Quarter 85	6.25	1.30		5.31	1.54		6.53	2.13	

[1]Number of teachers per correlation ranged from 36 to 79.

in three groupings: first the nine correlations between teacher absence rates for consecutive terms in the same school year (upper section), then the six correlations between absence rates for the same term in consecutive school years (middle section), and finally the six correlations between absence rates for different terms in consecutive school years (lower section).

Referring first to the upper section entries, in all three District II schools the correlations between the average class AB (teacher) measures, one term to the next, were moderately high (median of .67). These coefficients reflect a relatively stable, term-to-term ordering of teachers according to their classes' attendance. It must be concluded that at least within our sample schools, some teachers had predictively more class absences from term to term, while others had predictively fewer. Apparently, teachers with more student absences one term generally continued to have more class absences in subsequent terms, and teachers with fewer student absences generally continued to have fewer class absences. The relative within-school differences among teachers were maintained independent of changes in absences for the school as a whole.

In part, this constancy may be attributed to the fact that teachers generally had the same students throughout the school year. In the subsequent school year, most teachers had an almost totally different group of students. In some instances teachers taught courses that they had not taught the preceding year.

The correlations reported in the middle section of Table 2 refer to the stability of teacher class absences during the same term one year later. As may be seen in the table, these "successive year" correlations ranged from .70 to .50, (median of .57), not markedly lower than the successive term correlations. Given the fact that teachers had mostly different students the

second year, this stability of absence rates appears to be related more to the teacher, his or her particular teaching assignments, and classroom (attendance) management practices than to those students enrolled in a particular term or school year.

The lower sections of Table 2 report correlations between average class absences for teachers based on classes taught in different school years (therefore with different students) but also in different terms (therefore different courses). The six coefficients presented here ranged from .63 to .46, with a median of .51, again showing somewhat weaker ties than the "same term" relationships but still indicating a continuing tie to individual teachers. This "tie" does not preclude other contributing effects, however. It is not unlikely that the several classes assigned to a particular teacher attract much the same distribution of students (with respect to absences) or that certain aspects (subject matter, difficulty level) of those particular classes repeatedly taught by the same teacher are, in themselves, prominent determinants (promoters) of class absence.

2. Within-Teacher Differences: Further evidence of the strength or weakness of ties between particular teachers and their students' absences is the within-teacher consistency of class absences, that is, the extent to which absences vary from class to class taught the same term by the same teacher. Using rosters of nearly 1,500 classes taught during the final term of the 1983-84 school year, we made a listing of each teacher's lowest and highest class absence rate, AB (class), for all classes he or she taught that term. Most teachers varied considerably in attendance rates reported for their best-attended and worst-attended class. Only a third of the teachers reported similar absence rates for all their classes. Another third of all teachers reported at least three times as many absences in their worst-attended class as in their best-attended class.

We extended our statistical analysis for a sample of 105 teachers in two schools. For these teachers the average pupil absence in their best-attended classes was 5.0 periods missed during a ten-week term compared to 10.1 periods missed in their worst-attended classes, a ratio of 2:1. Inspection of the absence rates for those teachers with little class-to-class variation in student attendance indicated no relationship between low class-to-class variation and overall class attendance rates. Proportionately as many teachers with similar absence rates in all their classes had high absence rates in all their classes as did teachers whose absence rates varied from class to class. The broader picture is one of variability in average student absences among classes taught by the same teacher, but with class absences for high absence rate teachers simply to vary more around the high end of the class absence continuum and for low absence rate teachers, to vary more around the lower end. This within-teacher variability suggests that the particular content and student membership in a class can considerably affect the regularity of student attendance. Teachers likely are making heavier attendance demands in one class than in another or are able to make some of their classes more interesting to their students than other classes. Whereas teachers can still be identified as having better or worse class attendance record overall and this record is generally maintained for successive terms (as reflected in the Table 2 correlations), most teachers had one or more classes in which attendance was considerably better and one or more classes in which attendance was considerably worse.

3. Interdepartment Differences: Though the aforementioned within-teacher variability in class absence rates reduces expectation of prominent content area differences, the question of whether some subject areas "induce" more or less student absence warrants examination here.

The more immediate, albeit broad, classification of subject area is

that of department affiliation. Apart from this "broadness" of merging, say, English basic composition with literature or drama or of economics with European history, as single subject areas, there is, of course, also some built-in confounding of department subject area with department policy for student governance. As more closely knit subsets of the total faculty, departments may well have specialized focuses, more homogeneous philosophies, and agreed-upon rules and enforcement procedures regarding attendance. Except in instances where specialized programs exist in some schools but not in others, it is probable that these department beliefs and procedures are somewhat similar across schools and affect attendance as much (or more) than the actual course content. For example, a department may be more "elitist" and thus attract and enroll special "kinds" of students, or perhaps it may make special demands on students (in terms of punctuality or attendance). To the extent that these particulars are typical of some departments and common across courses, their effects (upon attendance, in this instance) are inseparable from that of the subjects being taught.

To compare class absences among different departments, we identified teachers as teaching in one of eleven areas or departments. Though the six schools varied somewhat in their staffing of these departments, all eleven were identified in each school.[2] The class absences for teachers in each department were averaged to provide a term-by-term department absence rate for each school. The correlations between department absence rates for successive school terms and school years for the three District II schools are presented in Table 3.

Though the term means provide evidence that absences in all schools varied considerably from term to term, the substantial correlation coefficients in Table 3 indicate that the relative positions of the department absence rates remained generally constant for successive terms and

TABLE 3

Correlations Between Average Class Absences in 11 Departments for Successive Terms and Years for 3 District II Schools

District II	School D			School E			School F		
Successive Terms	M	SD	r	M	SD	r	M	SD	r
Winter '84	6.96	.90		5.38	.97		6.26	.79	
Spring '84	6.04	.88	.80	5.56	1.36	.37	5.90	.64	.51
Fall '84	4.64	.69		4.46	.72		4.75	.92	
Winter '85	5.45	.63	.85	5.09	.97	.59	5.88	.73	.56
Winter '85	5.45	.63		5.09	.97		5.88	.73	
Spring '85	5.10	.76	.64	5.31	1.08	.74	5.23	.63	.88
Successive Years									
Winter '84	6.96	.90		5.38	.97		6.26	.79	
Winter '85	5.45	.63	.82	5.09	.97	.88	5.88	.73	.63
Spring '84	6.04	.88		5.56	1.36		5.89	.64	
Spring '85	5.10	.76	.79	5.31	1.08	.79	5.23	.63	.84

school years. The median of the nine correlations for successive terms is .64; the median of the six correlations for successive school years is .80 It should be noted that these coefficients are based on only eleven pairs of absence rates (N = 11 departments) and are therefore quite vulnerable (as in the case of the School E's winter/spring 1984 comparison) to substantial lowering by isolated absence change in one or two departments.

In addition to the generally high repeatability within schools from term to term that is reflected in the Table 3 correlations, considerable agreement was found among the three District II schools in our sample with respect to their ordering of their department absence averages. Similar agreements were also found for the two terms of data available for the three District I schools in our sample. Accordingly, averages for schools within districts were combined into composite departmental averages for each of the five school terms for District II and for the two school terms for District I. These averages are presented in Table 4.

The listing of departments in Table 4 is ordered from high to low with respect to each departments' overall (all terms combined) absence rate for the three District II schools combined. These combined averages as well as those throughout the District II school data reveal a clustering of departments into a high-, middle-, and low-absence groups. Industrial education, home economics, and health education, with student absence rates averaging 6.4, 6.3, and 6.1 missed periods per term, respectively, were consistently among the highest in student absences. Three other departments--fine arts, science, and foreign language--with student absence rates averaging 4.6, 4.7, and 4.7 missed periods, respectively, were consistently among the lowest in student absences. The remaining five departments (mathematics, English, social studies, business education, and physical education) all were generally grouped close together around their

TABLE 4

DEPARTMENTAL AVERAGE CLASS ABSENCES AND CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CONSECUTIVE TERMS[1] FOR 11 DEPARTMENTS IN TWO DISTRICTS

Departments	District II Combined Schools							Combined Schools		Dist. 1
	N[2]	1983-84 Win	Spring	Fall	1984-85 Win	Spring	ALL TERMS	83-4 4th term	84-5 3rd term	ALL TERMS
Indust Ed	10-11	6.4	7.3	6.5	6.0	6.0	6.4	7.8	7.4	7.6
Home Econ	9	7.4	6.8	4.8	6.4	6.1	6.3	8.2	8.0	6.1
Health Ed	6	7.0	6.2	4.9	6.0	6.2	6.1	6.6	6.6	6.6
Math	30-32	6.6	5.7	4.7	5.7	5.5	5.6	6.5	5.0	5.8
Social St	30-32	6.4	6.2	4.4	5.4	5.4	5.6	6.5	6.3	6.4
Phys Ed	16-15	6.5	6.1	4.7	5.4	5.0	5.5	6.6	5.9	6.3
Bus Ed	16-17	6.2	5.6	4.4	5.7	5.5	5.5	6.7	5.5	6.1
English	36-37	6.1	5.8	4.5	6.0	5.0	5.5	7.5	6.8	7.2
Foreign Lang	17-20	5.5	4.8	3.9	5.0	4.3	4.7	5.6	4.7	5.2
Science	18-21	5.2	4.9	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.7	7.1	5.7	6.4
Fine Arts	14	5.0	5.1	4.1	4.5	4.3	4.6	6.5	6.9	6.7
AVERAGE ABSENCES:		6.2	5.9	4.6	5.5	5.3	5.5	6.9	6.3	6.6
r		.74	.86	.59	.87	.96	.	.81		

[1] Correlations between pairs successive terms appear below that pair.

[2] Number of teachers in each department in 3 District II Schools. These numbers varied somewhat from term due to changes in Department teaching staff.

school's average absence rate. The stability of this "district level" ordering of departments is evident in the five generally high consecutive term correlations (median r = .80) that appear below each pair of columns.

A similar but more limited department absence analysis was made for the two terms of class absence data available for the three District I schools. As was done for District II, the department absences for two terms and three schools in District I were averaged into overall district averages, reported in the far right column of Table 4. The ordering of some departments in District I differed in some pronounced ways from those of District II. In particular, relatively heavier absences were noted for the District I English, fine arts, and science classes and relatively low absences for the mathematics classes. However, there were considerable similarities between the two school districts, as evidenced by the moderately high correlation of .63 between the two sets of "all terms" department absence rates. The generalizability of department effects (and of students choosing to enroll in those departments) on class absence apparently extends across districts to a considerable extent.

4. Within-Department Differences: The foregoing analyses have all dealt with department averages that aggregate all teachers within a department. A further question regarding possible variations in absence rates within departments needs to be asked. To what extent do all teachers within a department similarly have either high class absences or low class absences? Is a teacher's effect on his or her students' class absences discernible within a department?

Table 5 presents data from the three District II schools relevant to this question. Each column in the table describes the distribution of the teachers' overall class absence rates within a department, averaged over their several (generally five) terms of class absence data. The table

TABLE 5

Department Distributions of Average Class Absences
for 241 District II Teachers

Average Class Absence	Department										
	Fine Arts	Sci	For Lang	Eng	Bus Educ	Phys Educ	Soc Stud	Math	Home Econ	Health Educ	Indust Arts
1.0-1.9	2										
2.0-2.9	1	3	1	1			2				
3.0-3.9	3	5	7	4		1					
4.0-4.9	1	7	7	11	7	3	11	6	2		1
5.0-5.9	3	5	5	10	8	7	10	19	2	3	4
6.0-6.9	2	4	1	14	4	3	6	7	5	3	1
7.0-7.9	2		1	5	2	2	5	3			6
8.0-8.9											
9.0-9.9				1	1				1		
No. of Teachers	14	24	22	46	22	16	34	35	10	6	12

Note: Entries are the number of teachers in their respective department with an average absence for all their classes falling within the interval designated at the left.

entries are the number of teachers having average class absence rates within the intervals listed at the left of the table.

As may be seen from the Table 5 entries, there is considerable variation among the teachers' overall class absence rates within departments. Though this variation was increased slightly by combining teachers from the three schools, this increase is minimal compared to teacher differences within departments. The health education department is apparently an exception, with only six teachers providing data and all of them with average absences around six days per term. For most departments the teachers' average absence rates vary across half or more of the intervals in the table. Since each of these teacher rates is an average for five terms of students' absences, typically based on five classes taught each term, they are least subject to fluctuation and would be expected to "bunch" together rather than flatten and spread as they do. The English department is perhaps the most internally disparent in our data. Measures range from one teacher with a student absence rate around two periods per term to one with a rate of nearly ten periods per term. The fine arts and social sciences departments have nearly as broad a range. Even though departments differ with respect to their average number of student absences, teachers within these departments differ considerably in this same regard. Thus, we may conclude that department effects on absences modify but do not override individual teacher effects on student class absences.

5. Higher-Ability vs. Lower-Ability Classes: A variable possibly contributing to the differences of absences among teachers within the same department is the ability level of students enrolled in the different courses offered in the department. Though none of the six schools in the study practiced a strict track system of regimenting enrollments in a program of courses on the basis of the student's aptitude or career goals, within

some departments there were courses clearly intended for slower or faster learners, and students were encouraged not to enroll in classes that would be either too difficult or too easy for them. The result was that in all the schools, a portion of the classes (principally within the more traditional academic departments) had enrollments of mostly either high-ability or low-ability students. The most extreme examples of this were the advanced placement (AP) classes, which enrolled small numbers of juniors and seniors attempting to earn college credit through advanced high school courses.

The issue of whether differences existed in absences in courses with enrollments of students of different ability levels was examined by analyzing data from a set of classes for students with higher and lower ability levels in two of our high schools. The curriculum vice-principals in these schools identified the classes that typically enrolled either lower- or higher-ability students. The class absences used for comparisons were those for the final term of the 1983-84 school year. The identified classes represented approximately one-fifth of all course offerings in both schools; most courses had enrollments of students with mixed ability levels. Only departments that offered classes for both high- and low-ability students and only those classes whose teachers also taught classes for students with mixed ability levels in that same department were used in the analysis. Since few teachers taught courses for both slower and faster learners during the same term, we used their student absence rate in their mixed-ability classes for comparisons. A total of 51 teachers were included in the analysis, 27 teaching 50 classes enrolling 1,033 predominately low-ability students and 32 teaching 61 classes enrolling 1,330 predominately higher-ability students. Only 8 teachers simultaneously taught classes for high- and low-ability students during that term. Eighteen of the 51 teachers were in English departments, 20 in mathematics, 1 in science, and 8 in social science. The

average enrollment in classes for slower learners and for faster learners was nearly identical: 21.7 and 21.8 students, respectively. This was slightly lower than the average number of students in the "other" classes (24.6 students). The analysis involved comparing the average class absence rates for all "slower" and "harder" classes taught by a teacher with the average of the class absence rates for all other classes taught by that same teacher. These comparisons are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Absences in "Slower" and in "Harder" Classes Compared to Absences in Other Classes Taught by the Same Teacher in Two District II Schools

Slower Classes				Other Classes (same teachers)		
no. of teachers	no. of classes	no. of students	aver. class absence	no. of classes	no. of students	aver. class absence
27	50	1033	7.5	76	1920	4.7
Harder Classes				Other Classes (same teachers)		
32	61	1330	4.0	87	2091	5.4

As Table 6 shows, the average absences in classes for lower-ability students was half again as high as in "other" classes taught by the same teacher, whereas the average absence in classes for higher-ability students was nearly a third less than that in "other" classes taught by the same teachers. For the subsample of 8 teachers teaching both harder and slower classes, their class absence rate in slower classes was more than twice that in their harder classes. Apparently a teacher's class attendance varied with whether he or she taught a class designed for high-ability students, low-ability students, or average-ability students; in classes for students of

lower ability level, there were more absences.

This finding is tempered somewhat upon inspection of the individual teacher class absence rates. Though the mean differences in Table 6 are considerable,[3] these differences were much larger for some teachers than for others; in fact, for five teachers of slower classes and seven teachers of harder classes, the difference in class absences was even slightly reversed. This teacher variability again suggests an individualization of teacher-student interactions; it indicates that some teachers are able to command relatively high attendance and others obliged to settle for poor attendance regardless of the particular course or ability level of the students. However, these teachers are exceptions and represent only a small portion of the teachers we compared. For all the rest, the generalization holds that there were fewer absences in classes designed for higher-ability students than in those designed for average- or for lower-ability students.

6. Period Differences: Another variable that possibly contributes to the differences of absences among classes taught by the same teacher is the hour of day when they are taught. Though the six schools in our study differed in the way they scheduled classes, most arranged that nearly all of their classes would be taught within a seven-period day, one period being a lunch period. One District II school, however, had seven 50-minute periods per day plus a lunch period and a second school in that district scheduled eight 45-minute periods plus a lunch period. Our comparisons of absences in different class periods combines schools within a district, but we report data separately for the two districts since they differed both in their student absences and in the length of their school term (45 days in District I and 57 days in District II). The data for these comparisons came from the end-of-term report card records for the final term of the 1983-84 school year. In addition to courses and grades, these records identified each

course the student took, the period of day that class met, and the number of absences the student had in that class. These absences were compiled to develop distributions of student absences for each class period. These distributions are presented in Table 7.

All Table 7 entries are based on summations for three schools within a district. The column entries in Table 7 show the percentages of students who were absent from their different period classes a different number of times during the spring term. These various absence categories are listed to the left. The figures at the bottom of each column are the total number of absences recorded during the term for that period, the number of students enrolled in that period, and the average number of absences recorded for that period for these students.

The percentages for the several periods appear generally similar for the rows for zero to three absences within both school districts (except perhaps for the larger drop in the percentage of students with no absences and those with one absence in the District II schools). Typically 10 or 11 percent of enrolled students were absent in each of the first four categories (zero, one, two, or three absences) in the three District I schools. This accounts for around 40 percent of the district's student population. A similar pattern of absences in the same categories in District II accounts for around 50 percent of that district's student population. The average absence rates for each period reported at the bottom of each column reflect these period similarities. These average absence rates were roughly similar at all periods of the day and in both school districts, although one district's absence rate was consistently higher than the other district's.[4] In both districts, the average absence rate was highest in the fifth period (an after-lunch period for most students). Absence rates were also higher in the first period of the day when many students may have

TABLE 7

Percent Distribution of Student Absences during Their School Day in Two School Districts

Percent of Absences in Each Class Period

District I (Schools A, B and C, combined)

No. of Absences per Term	Period 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	11	10	10	11	10	11	9
1	10	11	12	10	10	11	11
2	10	11	10	11	10	10	11
3	10	10	9	10	9	9	10
4	9	10	9	9	8	8	8
5	7	8	9	8	7	7	7
6-10	23	21	24	23	23	21	25
11-15	10	8	8	9	10	10	9
16-20	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
21-25	2	2	2	2	3	2	3
26+	4	3	1	4	5	3	4
Total No. of Absences	19754	19093	18446	15864	16158	17925	6696
No. Students Enrolled	2763	2913	2860	2342	2190	2592	978
Aver. Period Absence	7.15	6.55	6.45	6.77	7.38	6.92	6.85

District II (Schools D, E and F combined)

No. of Absences per term	Period 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0	17	15	14	16	14	15	21	20
1	12	13	12	13	11	12	11	12
2	11	13	12	12	12	12	12	13
3	10	10	12	11	10	9	11	10
4	8	9	10	10	8	8	9	8
5	6	8	7	8	8	8	7	8
6-10	22	21	23	23	22	24	20	19
11-15	8	8	7	6	8	8	5	6
16-20	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
21+	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Total No. of Absences	15237	15008	14360	11175	12492	11390	7598	5648
No. Students Enrolled	2925	3065	2936	2347	2374	2169	1677	1233
Aver. Period Absences	5.21	4.90	4.89	4.76	5.27	5.25	4.53	4.58

Note: Table entries are percents of enrolled students in each absence category. Earlier or later periods enrolling fewer than a fourth of the students are not included.

come to school late. Somewhat surprising was the lack of increased absences in the last period of the day, particularly in the spring term. One reason for this lack of end-of-day cutting is perhaps student self-selection; many students may have already exercised their option not to have a seventh- or eighth-period class. This could be especially true of seniors, nearly half of whom enrolled in less than five classes per term in their final year. The much lower enrollment figures in Table 7 for the seventh and eighth periods are consistent with this interpretation.

In addition to the particular period descriptions, several other general observations may be made regarding the data in Table 7. The first is the very large number of period absences, over 200,000 in 10 to 12 weeks for some 7,000 students in 6 schools, an average of around 30 per student. Each school in our study (and we believe that their absence rates are probably lower than average compared to other schools across the nation) recorded about a fourth to a third of its students with at least one class absence each school day.

A second observation to be made is that student absences are more alike from period to period than they are different. We must conclude that for both district samples, time of day has only a minor influence on class attendance.

A third point relates to the distributions of absences. In all periods a sizeable portion of students (around one-fourth) had perfect or near-perfect attendance. This is not to imply that these students missed only one or two classes all term. Less than 3 percent of the students actually had this attendance record. Rather, most students with near-perfect attendance in some classes were absent more often in their other classes. The data in Table 7 simply indicate that this low rate of class absence for roughly one-fourth of the students was common in all periods of the day.

Finally, the distribution of students with repeated absences is also similar for all periods. These students with high absence rates also comprise about one-fourth of the total student enrollment. Whether they are as frequently absent from their other classes cannot be determined from the period-by-period data. However, these students are almost certainly failing the classes they do not attend regularly. If they are also frequently absent from their other classes, they are their school's "chronic cutters" and are at high risk of dropping out.[5]

7. Class Size and Grading Practices: Two other class descriptors possibly associated with student absence are the number of students enrolled in the class and grading practices, i.e., the distribution of As, Bs, Cs, Ds, and Fs that students receive. A popular belief is that attendance is less easy to control in larger classes with less personal teacher-pupil contact and that (other things being equal) students choose to cut these classes because their absence is less noticeable. On the other hand, if the teacher does not notice their absence, this would have the effect of reducing reported class absences in larger classes. However, we have no information supporting greater error rates in reporting absences in larger classes, and, at any rate, in our study the classes we considered had enrollments of between 20 and 30 students, which probably posed no special problems for attendance-conscious teachers using check lists.[6]

There is also a possible dual effect of course grades on attendance. Whereas students who are frequently absent may avoid enrolling in classes where fewer high grades are given (though students who are frequently absent express less concern about grades than do students with good attendance records [deJung and Duckworth, 1985]), students in these classes in which they are apt to earn poorer grades have less reason to maintain "perfect" attendance. In effect, the reward for class attendance is lessened where

higher grades are less likely. This may contribute to poorer attendance. But if the more frequently absent student has already avoided enrolling in these classes, average class attendance is increased.

The possible relationship between these two variables and student absences was first examined by separating out the possible effects of class period. This was done by correlating class size and the average grades given in each class with that class's average student absence separately for classes taught within each of the school periods. These correlations are reported in Table 8. Spring 1984 data from two District I schools were used in this analysis to provide a replication across schools. The first school had 297 classes during a seven-period day; the second had 235 classes during a six-period day. The number of classes within each period within each school ranged from a low of 24 classes during the midday lunch periods to a high of 52 classes in the second and sixth periods.

Class sizes for the correlations reported in Table 8 ranged from 10 to 42 students with a median of 21. None of the 13 within-period correlations of class size with class absence was significantly different from zero at the .05 level; five were negative, eight were positive, and the median was .02. For the range of class size found in our data (from 10 to 42 students), class size was clearly not a determinant of average number of absences in a class.

Class average grades ranged from a high of 3.85 (nearly all As) to a low of .95 (more Fs than Ds) with a mean of 2.48. The 13 within-period correlations of class grades and absences were all negative and significantly different from zero at the .05 level, ranging from a low of -.35 to a high of -.66, with a median of -.57. These correlations are all based on pairing the average grade given students in individual classes with their average absence in that class.

TABLE 8

Correlations Between AB (class) and Class Size and Average Grade
(Computed by Period for Two District I Schools)

Period	Number of Classes	Average AB (class)	Average Class Size	Average Class Grade	Correlation AB (class) with	
					Class Size	Class Grade
			School A			
1	43	8.3	18.4	2.1	.02	-.66
2	38	7.3	21.6	2.1	.25	-.45
3	38	7.5	22.1	2.1	.13	-.51
4	37	7.8	20.6	2.0	-.01	-.37
5	39	8.5	20.7	2.0	-.11	-.35
6	40	8.0	18.8	2.0	.23	-.39
			School C			
1	48	6.9	20.4	2.4	.27	-.59
2	52	6.6	20.4	2.6	-.17	-.60
3	48	6.1	21.4	2.4	-.23	-.57
4	24	7.0	23.3	2.5	.14	-.57
5	30	7.1	17.3	2.6	.29	-.64
6	52	6.2	18.8	2.5	.21	-.62
7	40	7.3	21.5	2.4	-.30	-.58

We modified this analysis of class grades by using the percentage of A and B grades the teacher gave rather than the average grade (which often would equate a distribution of all middle grades with one of equally large numbers of A and F grades). This sum of the percentages of As and Bs was available for the two District I schools providing the data for our grades-by-period analyses. The two school correlations for the percentage of A and B grades and average class absence were -.47 and -.48, respectively, each only slightly lower than those obtained by using the average class grade. Both analyses indicate that fewer high grades and more failing grades are assigned in classes with poor attendance.

These analyses for two schools and period-by-period data were extended to all six schools by using the teacher's overall absence rate, AB (teacher), for all periods combined in the spring 1984 term, and the total number of students the teacher taught and the average grade given to these students that term. Correlations between these variables are presented in Table 9.

The sample sizes (number of teachers) involved in each of the correlations in Table 9 ranged from 46 to 60. The total number of students taught by a teacher ranged from just below 50 to nearly 150. The six correlations of total number of students taught and teacher's overall absence rate varied around zero, with a median correlation of -.04. Whereas the preceding correlations involved class size and these involved the total number of students taught (generally higher for teachers teaching more classes), both sets of correlations indicate that there is little relationship between the number of students a teacher has (either within a class or for all classes combined) and the average absences of those students.

The correlations reported in Table 9 between AB (teacher) and average

TABLE 9

Correlations between AB (teacher) and Total Number of Students and Average Grade
(Computed for Spring Term '84 for 6 Schools)

School	Number of Teachers	Average AB (teach.)	Average Total No. of Students	Average Student Grade	Correlation AB (teacher) with	
					Class Size	Class Grade
A	54	7.8	95	2.0	-.06	-.52
B	46	6.3	93	2.2	-.02	-.38
C	60	6.8	91	2.5	.07	-.53
D	55	6.1	113	2.4	.18	-.54
E	57	5.4	103	2.6	-.01	-.37
F	52	5.7	112	2.8	-.22	-.47

grade are similar to those between AB (class) and average grade reported in Table 8. The six correlations in Table 9 were all negative and significantly different from zero at the .05 level, ranging between -.38 and -.54, with a median of -.50. The earlier conclusion that lower grades are assigned in classes with poorer attendance may be extended to assert that, considering all classes which they are teaching, teachers who have higher overall absence rates assign lower grades more frequently. Whether teachers give lower grades to students in part because of their absences or whether students simply tend to cut classes more frequently when higher grades are more difficult to earn cannot be determined by this analysis. However, our teacher survey (reported in next section) revealed near unanimous agreement among teachers that "no student who is frequently absent should receive an A grade." This attitude, combined with the prevalent practice among teachers of lowering grades of their repeatedly absent students, suggests that lower grades follow rather than precede student absences.

Additionally, more intensive examinations of absences of failing students (based on District II school data) also support the view that students with high numbers of absences fail because of their repeated absences. One finding was that those students who had high absence rates and were failing early in the term rarely received a failing grade at the end of the term when they reduced their absences after the middle of the term. One corollary here is that students who can amend their poor attendance pattern won't receive F grades. However, inspection of end-of-term lists of failing students also revealed large numbers of students with moderate absence rates. Operationally, the reward (a passing grade for improved attendance) can hardly apply to a student who had reasonably good attendance to start with.

Comparisons between Teachers with High and Low Student Absences

Apart from our preceding examinations of class descriptions, such as subject area, difficulty (student ability level), time of day, class size, and assignment of grades, two general factors offering possible explanations for differences in teachers' student absence rates are teacher characteristics and student characteristics. To some degree these interrelate with content and with each other. Students' self-selection of courses is based on content and on the teacher teaching the class; likewise, teachers' responses (to varying extents) are likely to be based on the type of students they are teaching. Quite possibly, students who intend to cut classes or who are already in the habit of doing so avoid teachers with reputations for carefully monitoring attendance and for responding with tough disciplinary actions. To the extent this occurs, teacher reputation affects class absences. On the other hand, it may be that teachers assigned to teach required survey classes, for example, perceive their students as distinterested in the subject and become less concerned about class attendance. Their perception of their students' disinterest (in this example) quite possibly affects class attendance. In a sense, this confounding of student and teacher characteristics is a component of all our analyses of student absences. We can't have one without the other; both are inextricably operating in our classrooms.

Our inquiries in this section of the report primarily involve teacher descriptions of themselves and their classes of students. Our concern will be whether teachers with lower overall class absence rates differ in these descriptions from their colleagues who have higher overall class absence rates. In effect, we will be asking which descriptors are related to class attendance.

1. Student Attendance Questionnaire: Our data regarding our teachers and their students' characteristics comes from a teacher questionnaire (see Appendix A) designed to examine a wide range of factors possibly related to student attendance. These included teacher descriptions of their students; their concerns regarding student absences: their acceptance, monitoring, and enforcement of attendance rules; their perceptions of administrative support; and their teaching philosophy or beliefs regarding students more generally. After trial administration for language and format checks, a revised form of the questionnaire was prepared for distribution to all teachers in our six schools. These teachers completed their questionnaires in late April and early May of 1984. A second questionnaire was distributed in late February and early March of 1985.

A total of 373 questionnaires were returned after the first administration, with nearly every full-time teacher responding. In compiling our questionnaire responses, we excluded teachers of the handicapped or of other special student groups. This reduced our usable questionnaires to 339 for the first administration and 347 for the second administration, in which only regular class teachers were given questionnaires. The 1984 questionnaire contained 39 multiple-choice items; two of these items were deleted from the 1985 questionnaire and three new items were added. All items were multiple response, some asking for extent of respondent agreement or disagreement with a given statement, such as "If we want to reduce class cutting, we need strong penalties." Other questions asked about the frequency of such teacher behaviors as assigning homework or phoning parents regarding absent students. Inquiries about the teachers themselves (i.e., number of years teaching) and about their students (percentage working part-time or planning to go to a four-year college) were also included. Appendix A contains a full listing of the 42 questionnaire items.

Since we had two administrations of our questionnaire, an immediate question was the constancy of our teachers' responses. The test-retest interval was approximately ten months, during which time as much as a third of the student enrollment changed. In addition to transfers and dropouts, whole classes of new freshmen entered the schools and seniors left them; thus, most teachers had different students to teach. Further, when the second questionnaire was distributed (in a different school term) nearly all teachers had different class assignments. Also, some attendance management practices changed during this period (Duckworth and deJung, 1986a). All these differences aside, the comparison of the responses of the same teacher on the two administrations of the questionnaire is of interest because it provides a lower limit of the stability (reliability) of our teachers' responses.

A sample of 100 of the 256 teachers providing both 1984 and 1985 questionnaire responses was examined for constancy of response. Special changes within items, such as an increase in number of years taught or a change in response from "new here; don't know" or to "does not apply," were not counted as changes since these clearly are not changes in self-description or in opinion. The two information items (Items 1 and 2) concerning teacher experience were, as anticipated, the least changed. Only 5 of 400 responses were identifiable as probable error. Items to which most teachers responded similarly in the first administration, such as "being concerned to be accurate regarding attendance records" and "I strictly enforce attendance rules," also had relatively low change rates of around 13 percent, that is to say, 13 of the 100 teacher respondents in our reliability sample gave a response to these items in 1985 that differed from that they gave in 1984. For most remaining items, the change rate over the 10-month retest interval was around 30 percent.

Stated in terms of stability of response, the average percentage of agreement for all 36 repeated questionnaire items was 71.7. For most items these percentages refer to identical responses on the two questionnaires. Since nearly all the analysis of the questionnaire responses involved combinations of similar responses, such as "disagree" with "strongly disagree," the percentage of agreement for these combined alternatives could be expected to be considerably higher. Nearly all questionnaire items had response alternatives ordered either quantitatively or subjectively from more to less, or the reverse. Changes of only one among these ordered alternatives (i.e., to the very next higher or lower response alternative) accounted for nearly 90 percent of all retest changes. More generally, the questionnaire appears sufficiently reliable for the proposed analysis. Teachers for the most part were unchanged in their second questionnaire responses; and when they did change, they nearly always moved to an adjacent response. Whether these changes are due to real or imagined changes during the retest interval or are due to response error, however, is indeterminate. Since the analysis of the questionnaire responses described below combines both the 1984 and 1985 administrations into a single average percent response for each item, this error component is minimized.

For the purposes of examining the teachers' descriptions of themselves and their classes, we divided teachers responding to the questionnaire into three categories to form high, middle, and low class absence groups, based on the teacher's average student absence rate in all classes he or she taught during the term of the questionnaire administration. These groupings were first determined within each school to balance possible differences between schools. Then all teachers with student absence rates in the highest third from all six schools were combined into a single "high" group, all teachers in middle third were combined into one "middle" group,

and all teachers in the lowest third were combined into one "low" group. This combining of all six schools was done for both the 1984 and 1985 groupings of teachers. In order to be included in our analyses, a teacher needed both to have completed a questionnaire and to have had a class absence rate calculated. The combined 1984 groupings consisted of 98 teachers in both the low and high thirds, and 99 teachers in the middle third. The combined 1985 groups consisted of 106 teachers in both the high and low thirds, and 102 teachers in the middle third.

The analysis of the teacher questionnaire responses followed similar stages of consolidation. First, percentages of teachers choosing the various alternatives to each item were computed for the high-, middle-, and low-absence groups in each school for both questionnaire administrations. These percentages were compared across schools and across administrations separately within the high-, middle-, and low-absence groups for all questionnaire items. Generally, few differences were found.[7] The major teacher response changes on the two questionnaire administrations were the decreased reports of their direct involvement in penalizing their students for unexcused absences and the increased reports of their support of their administrators regarding management of attendance. However, teachers continued to report that student absences stayed at about the same level, and nearly all continued to recommend stronger penalties for class cutting.

On the basis of their general similarities, the percentages for the six schools and two administrations were combined as the average percent response to a given item alternative by either the high-, middle-, or low-absence group. This averaging minimized the "error" component in either administration. These average percent responses by the three teacher groups to the 42 questionnaire items are presented in Tables 10 through 14. Though there was undoubtably much overlap in the teacher membership in the 1984 and

1985 teacher groupings,[8] a teacher achieving a marked decrease or increase in his or her class absences during these different years would likely have been placed in a higher or lower absence group for the second questionnaire administration. Examination of teacher listings revealed that changes in group placements actually occurred for one-forth of the teachers, but only one in seven of these changes was between the extreme groups.

2. Teacher Characteristics. Our 1984 teacher sample consisted of 186 male and 112 female teachers. This sex distribution generally maintained for the 1985 sample, which comprised 187 males and 127 female teachers. It was also consistent within each of our three class absence groupings. The ratios appearing in Table 10 for the combined two-year sample are quite similar to the two individual-year ratios. The class absence rates for male and female teachers (based on the last term of the 1983-84 school year) were 5.8 and 6.2, respectively, for the combined District I and District II schools. The relatively high absence rates in departments taught primarily by females (i.e., home economics) also occurred in departments taught primarily by males (i.e., industrial arts). Throughout our examination of the class absence data, substantive differences between male and female teachers simply failed to materialize. Neither sex appeared to be more successful or less successful, as a group, in affecting his or her students' attendance. Our data suggest that class absences are unrelated to sex of teacher.

Analyses described earlier in this paper reported negligible relationships between teachers' overall class absences and either size of class or total number of students taught. The averages reported in Table 10 for these variables is in accord with this lack of relationship. The average number of students taught by teachers in our questionnaire analysis samples was 104 in the low-absence group, 108 in the middle group, and 103 in the

high group. Within the three groups, the range in the numbers of students was from below 50 to over 150.

Table 10
Demographic Characteristics of Teachers in the Low-, Middle-, and High-Absence Groups

	Absence Group		
	Low	Middle	High
Number of Teachers[1]	161	167	162
Sex			
Male	104 (65%)	98 (59%)	94 (58%)
Female	57 (35%)	69 (41%)	68 (42%)
Average Number of Students/Teacher	104	108	103
Average Grade Given	2.57	2.37	2.07
Average Class Absence	4.30	5.58	7.23
Item 2. Years of Experience			
10 or more years	88	82	87
3-9 years	11	15	12
less than 3 years	1	3	1
Item 1. Years in Present School			
10 or more years	44	45	43
3-9 years	27	30	30
less than 3 years	28	25	26

Note: All entries are for the combined two questionnaire samples. All entries for questionnaire items are percents of respondents.

[1] Some teachers responded to only one questionnaire. Some others were represented twice, typically once as a middle-group teacher and once in either extreme group.

The first two questionnaire items asked teachers about the number of years of teaching experience they had and the number of years they had taught in their present school, respectively. Though we lacked direct age data, responses to this first item were probably reasonably correlated with the age of the teacher. Over 80 percent of our teachers reported 10 or more years of teaching experience. Whereas only three teachers (1 percent) reported being

first-year teachers in either year of the questionnaire administration, nearly 50 (16 percent) reported being new to their present school at the time of the first questionnaire administration. Nearly all these teachers were from District II high schools, which had just converted from three- to four-year schools. There were only half as many "new" teachers in our six schools in the second questionnaire administration. The largest proportion (44 percent) of the total teacher sample had been in their present school least ten years. Roughly a third had from three to nine years tenure in their school. However, neither years of experience nor recency of school transfer appeared to be related to the teacher's class absence. We found as many low-absence group as high-absence group teachers in all "experience" categories. The correlations between responses to these two items and all questionnaire items referring to student absence (computed for total 1984 teacher sample) were all around zero.

3. Teachers' Descriptions of Students. Seven questionnaire items referred to the classes these teachers taught. Their responses are summarized in Table 11 as percentages of teachers in the low-, middle-, and high-absence groups choosing each alternative. Item 4 referred to their students' college plans. As may be seen in the Table 11 entries, relatively few teachers[9] in the high-absence group, compared to nearly a third of the teachers in the low-absence group, reported large percentages of their students (60 percent or more) likely to go to a four-year college. At the other extreme, two-thirds of the teachers in the high-absence group (67 percent) responded that less than a third of their students were college bound. This difference is consistent with the previously discussed differences in absences in classes designed for students of higher ability and lower ability. Though these findings suggest that college-bound students will have better class attendance, a stricter interpretation of the present

TABLE 11

Descriptions of Their Students Reported by
Low, Middle and High Absence Teachers

Item	Alternatives	Teacher Absence Group		
		Low	Middle	High
4. Percent of their students likely to go to a four-year college.	10% or less	16	21	26
	20-30%	25	37	41
	40-50%	26	24	23
	60-70%	14	13	8
	80 % or more	17	5	1
5. Percent of their students interested in the subjects taught by the teacher.	10% or less	3	2	3
	20-30%	8	17	18
	40-50%	27	34	39
	60-70%	39	31	28
	80% or more	22	16	11
9. Number of their students tardy on an average day.	almost none	22	8	9
	less than 10%	58	57	54
	about 10%	18	30	28
	20% or more	2	4	9
10. Number of their students absent on an average day.	less than 10%	42	32	26
	about 10%	43	42	38
	about 20%	14	21	31
	30% or more	2	3	4
7. Number of tardies in their classes (compared to last year).	more	18	27	24
	less	22	20	22
	same	60	54	55
6. Number of unexcused absences in their classes (compared to last year).	more	16	18	25
	less	30	22	23
	same	53	59	51
13. Number of absences believed to be legitimate.	1 in 5 or less	22	24	30
	about 2 in 5	25	29	31
	about 3 in 5	33	36	29
	about 4 in 5	15	10	4
	nearly all	6	2	1

findings is simply that class attendance may be expected to be higher in classes with enrollments of primarily college-bound students. The college-bound student's absences in his or her other less "academically-oriented" classes may well be as high as that of other students.[10]

The teachers in the low- and high-absence groups also differed in their reports of their students' interest in their subject (Item 5). Sixty-one percent of the teachers in the low-absence group compared to only 39 percent of the teachers in the high-absence group reported 60 percent or more of their students interested. Perhaps the more surprising finding here is that this many teachers with high class absence rates reported such a high percentage of their students as interested. We had anticipated that "interested" students would be infrequently absent. A partial explanation here is the effect of possibly more extensive absence primarily from a 40 percent section of uninterested students, which can be quite sufficient to substantially lower the classes' average absence rate. A more direct explanation is simply that in at least some classes (and subject areas), student interest in the subject does not, in itself, compel more frequent attendance.

Items 9 and 7 refer to teacher estimates of their students' tardies. More than twice as many teachers in the low-absence group as in the high-absence group reported none of their students being tardy on an average day, whereas these percentages were reversed at the high-frequency end of the scale; 20 percent of the low-absence teachers reported 10 percent or more tardies compared to 37 percent of the teachers in the high-absence group. In all frequency categories, the teachers in the middle-absence group reported percentages very much like those of the high-absence group.

Differences between the low- and high-absence group teacher responses

to Item 10, "How many of their students are absent on an average day?" followed a pattern similar to that for the "tardy" question; namely, more low-absence teachers reported lower percentages of their students absent. Similarly, at the other end of the scale, twice as many teachers in the high-absence group (35 percent) as in the low-absence group (16 percent) reported a fifth or more of their students absent. A problem here is not with the group differences, which are reasonable, but with the teachers' gross overestimation of their students' absences, which is evident in their responses to Item 10. Based on an average figure of 51 days/term, a 20 percent absence rate would equate to an average of around 10 or more days of class absence per term, which was more than twice as high as that for any teachers in the low-absence group. To be consistent with their own end-of-term attendance reports on which their class absence rates were based, all teachers in the low-absence group should have responded "less than 10 percent of my students are absent." Possibly, their response of 10 percent absence, which averages to two or three students absent per period for most classes, simply seems low to most of our teachers. At any rate, as made evident in Table 11, 59 percent of the low-absence group reported their student absence much higher than it actually was according to these same teachers' class records (which they used for report cards).

Similar overestimating occurred with many of the teachers in the middle- and high-absence groups. The average class absence rates for these teachers (based on end-of-term report card data entered by these same teachers) were around 11 percent and 14 percent, respectively. In neither term the questionnaire was administered did more than 1 or 2 percent of the teachers have an absence rate approaching 20 percent. Thus, at least a third overstated their students' absences.

Items 7 and 6, which asked teachers to compare the number of tardies

and unexcused absences, respectively, in their classes in the current year with prior years, produced generally similar responses for the three absence groups. Roughly a fifth to a fourth of each group reported an increase in these behaviors but just as many reported a decrease. A minor difference was that more teachers in the high-absence group reported an increase both in their students' tardies and class absences. In all groups, however, the majority reported no change in frequencies of these attendance problems. An interesting side comment is provided by responses to Item 13. Roughly a fourth of the teachers in all groups indicated that they believed no more than one in five student absences was for a "legitimate" reason. As many teachers again said that two absences in five might be legitimate. This disbelief (or cynicism) about absence legitimacy, though more prevalent in the high-absence group (61 percent) than in the low-absence group (47 percent), is, nonetheless, seriously high in all groups. To the extent that teachers regard attendance and honesty as important, this negative expectation suggests a poor basis for teacher/student relationships. Only in the low-absence group did as many as 20 percent of the teachers report beliefs that only one absence in five was likely to be a truant behavior. The discomfort of teachers and administrators having to accept suspect excuses for absences is presumably more of a problem for teachers with higher class absence rates than it is for the other teacher groups.

4. Classroom Teaching Practices. The seven questionnaire items listed in Table 12 refer to classroom or teaching behaviors. These include assigning homework frequently, making heavy demands on students, reducing course credit or grades for frequently absent students, sticking to class schedules, adopting different goals and grading criteria for weaker students, and providing frequent out-of-class help for these students. Though the responses of teachers with lower and higher class absence rates to most of

TABLE 12

Classroom Teaching Practices Reported by
Low, Middle and High Absence Teachers

Item	Alternatives	Teacher Absence Group		
		Low	Middle	High
8. Frequency of giving homework in most of their classes	almost never	13	14	17
	less than once a week	8	8	7
	about once a week	8	14	24
	2-3 times a week	30	34	28
	almost daily	40	30	22
32. Has reputation as a teacher who makes heavy demands on students	strongly agree	27	12	14
	agree	51	55	50
	disagree	21	33	35
30. No frequently absent student should receive full crec or an A grade	strongly agree	54	60	58
	agree	30	30	34
	disagree	16	8	8
18. Frequency of reducing students' grade for repeated absences	a regular procedure	47	48	53
	on occasion	17	29	21
	hardly ever/NA[1]	36	21	25
36. Believes in sticking to schedule for course content than slowing for students who are behind	strongly agree	12	13	16
	agree	38	41	42
	disagree	51	46	42
38. Adopts different goals and grading criteria for students who consistently perform poorly	strongly agree	10	7	10
	agree	43	40	55
	disagree	47	53	35
20. Frequency of providing outside class time for students who are doing poorly	a regular procedure	57	44	48
	on occasion	39	49	45
	hardly ever/NA[1]	5	8	7

[1]Not Applicable (NA) included with hardly ever as a "never" response.

these items were generally similar, they contained a number of interesting differences. One such difference was in regularity of homework assignments (Item 8). Forty percent of the teachers in the low-absence group compared to only 22 percent of teachers in the high-absence group reported "almost daily" homework. This difference was reversed by the larger proportions (24 percent) of teachers in the high-absence group reporting that they assign homework only "about once a week" compared to 8 percent for the low-absence group. These differences, though clearly not applicable to all teachers in either group, support the popular belief that a more demanding curriculum also helps to sustain student attendance. The possibility that students who were more habitually absent would tend to avoid these classes would also result in lower absence rates in these classes.

The numbers of teachers of subjects with which homework is traditionally associated, such as mathematics, English, science, and social science, were distributed similarly across the high-, middle-, and low-absence groups. Another factor working against a difference between the low- and high-absence group here is the portion of classes students cut because they had not completed an assignment. That this is a popular "excuse" given for cutting class was evident from student responses to an absence survey administered at the time of the teacher questionnaire,[11] in which a fifth of all students selected this response as the "biggest reason they would cut a class."

A related item concerned more general teacher demands on students (Item 32). Nearly two-thirds or more of the teachers in all three absence groups agreed that they had a reputation "for making heavy demands on students." However, 27 percent of the teachers in the low-absence group responded that they "strongly" agreed that this was how they were perceived, compared to only 12 percent and 14 percent of the teachers in the middle- and

high-absence group, respectively. This difference, though limited perhaps by the preference of nearly all teachers to describe themselves as "demanding," is a further support of relationship between class demands and student absence.

Teacher responses to two items referring to "refusing an A grade to frequently absent students" (Item 30) and "reducing their grades" (Item 18) offer less prominent distinctions between the low- and high-absence groups. Approximately 90 percent of teachers in all groups agreed that frequently absent students shouldn't receive A grades, and roughly half in all groups reported that they lowered their students' grades for repeated absences as a regular procedure. A minor difference for this latter item is the larger proportion of teachers in the low-absence group reporting "hardly ever" or "not applicable" (36 percent) compared to the proportion responding to these choices in the high-absence group (25 percent). This difference may be partially explained by the fact that teachers in the low-absence group most problably have far fewer repeatedly absent students and therefore less occasion to "lower grades."

Less directly related to student absences, the last three items in Table 11 refer to a different aspect of teacher behavior: that of expressed instructional concern for all students. In all groups teachers are clearly divided in their responses to these three items. With respect to group differences, slightly more teachers in the high-absence group than in the low-absence group (58 percent compared to 50 percent, respectively) favored "sticking to their schedule for course content rather than slowing down for students who are behind" (Item 36). This between-group difference suggests that student-centered concerns prevail over curriculum-centered concerns for more of the teachers with lower absence rates. However, responses to Item 38, "adapting different goals and grading criteria for poorly performing

students" seems to reverse this statement, since 65 percent of the teachers in the high-absence group agreed with the statement compared to 53 percent of teachers in the low-absence group.

Taken together, the response differences to these items identify the teachers in the high-absence group as more curricula-oriented and more accommodating to their weaker students. Group differences in teacher responses to the final item, "frequency of providing these same students outside of class time help" (Item 20) perhaps somewhat clarifies this description of these teachers as less concerned with students. Fifty-seven percent of the teachers in the low-absence group compared to 48 percent of teachers in the high-absence group reported that they regularly provided their weaker students with help outside of class time.

Though none of these group differences were strikingly large (compared to their frequent similarities), taken together, teacher responses to the seven items related to teaching practices suggest a general distinction between groups of teachers whose students had better or poorer class attendance records. More teachers in the low absence group made heavier demands on their students, and they also departed more readily from their planned coverage of course content. At the same time, more of these teachers regularly provided special personal help (outside of class time) to their poorer students. More teachers in the high-absence group, on the other hand, reported rigidity with respect to their class schedules but still accommodated their slower students through individualized goals and grading criterion.

5. Attendance Monitoring Practices. Teachers have a number of options with respect to supporting and monitoring their students' attendance. They are required to "take," or record, period-by-period attendance; but beyond that, how they confront miscreant students is a personal choice. The

several questionnaire items listed in Table 13 refer to some of these choices. In responding to Items 22 and 29, very nearly all teachers reported that they "strictly enforce rules on attendance" in their classes and were "concerned to be as accurate as possible in my daily attendance records." Responses were very similar for all three absence groups. Though the teachers were much more evenly divided as to whether parents help them in reducing their students' class absences, the proportions were generally the same for each of the absence groups.

The distributions of teacher responses to the four questionnaire items referring to frequency of teachers calling their students' homes (Item 15), informing their counselor (Item 16), and assigning penalties (Item 17) as a consequence of repeated unexcused absences, and of assigning penalties for tardiness (Item 19), are also similar for the three absence groups. A single exception is the larger percentage of teachers in the low-absence groups (20 percent) than in the high- or middle-absence group (10 percent) who reported that they called their students' homes as a "regular procedure." Possibly this group difference again indicates (as for Item 20 above) a greater (or regular) time investment by more teachers in the low-absence group.[12]

A more considerable difference not revealed in the Table 13 summary data is the reduction during the ten-month retest interval of teachers either calling students' homes or assigning penalties to repeatedly absent students. The reduction in these actions is most likely due to improved record-keeping and home contact procedures provided through the schools' attendance office.[13] Surprisingly, this effect of improved attendance monitoring at the school level did not extend to the amount of time teachers reported they used for attendance monitoring (Item 12). Generally similar proportions of teachers in all absence groups reported either increases or reductions in the

TABLE 13

Attendance Monitoring Practices Reported by Low, Middle and High Absence Teachers

	Item	Alternatives	Teacher Absence Group		
			Low	Middle	High
22.	Strictly enforce attendance rules in their classes	strongly agree	50	41	49
		agree	47	52	42
		disagree	3	7	9
29.	Concerned to be accurate as possible in their daily attendance records	strongly agree	67	73	76
		agree	32	25	22
		disagree	2	2	2
35.	Parents help me in reducing my student's	agree	49	43	43
		disagree	51	57	57
15.	Frequency of calling students' home for repeated unexcused absences	a regular procedure	20	11	10
		on occasion	40	48	53
		hardly ever/NA[1]	40	42	37
16.	Frequency of informing counselor for repeated unexcused absences	a regular procedure	52	45	52
		on occasion	36	47	40
		hardly ever/NA[1]	12	8	9
17.	Frequency of assigning detention or other penalities for repeated unexcused absences	a regular procedure	15	13	16
		on occasion	19	21	20
		hardly ever/NA[1]	65	66	64
19.	Frequency of assigning detention or other penalties for tardiness	a regular procedure	20	21	21
		on occasion	22	18	27
		hardly ever/NA[1]	58	60	51
12.	Amount of their school day used in identifing, recording and following up on class absences or tardies	one hour or more	7	5	6
		about 45 minutes	8	14	16
		about 30 minutes	29	40	39
		about 15 minutes	40	32	28
		about 10 minutes	16	10	10
21.	Am satisfied with support from adminis. and counselors re: class attendance prob.	strongly agree	21	12	8
		agree	37	47	40
		disagree	42	42	52
34.	Our administrators have provided effective leadership re: dealing with attendance prob.	strongly agree	11	4	4
		agree	43	48	42
		disagree	45	47	54
39.	I have class cutting reasonably well controlled in my classes	agree	69	44	53
		disagree	31	56	47

[1]Not applicable (NA) is included with "hardly ever" as a "never" response.

amount of time they spent "identifying, recording, or following up on class absences or tardies" both years. One exception (paradoxically indicating that improved centralized procedures can mean more, not less, teacher time) was the decrease, from 23 percent to 10 percent, in the low-absence group response that "ten minutes or less" was spent monitoring attendance. But even with this reduction, a larger percentage of teachers in the low-absence group (56 percent) than in the high-absence group (38 percent) reported spending "15 minutes or less" of their school day with attendance monitoring. This is, of course, explainable in that teachers in the low-absence group have fewer absent students to monitor.

The effect of the improved centralized attendance-monitoring procedures is very probably reflected in the considerable increases, from below 50 percent to around 65 percent, of teachers reporting satisfaction with administrator support and with leadership (Items 21 and 34). Though these increases were generally equal in all three absence groups, the high-absence group remain the least satisfied--about 47 percent gave responses indicating satisfaction compared to about 56 percent in the low-absence group. This somewhat greater dissatisfaction in the high-absence group is easily attributable to the considerably larger number of their students being absent. Most teachers, as indicated in the previous items referring to phone calling or detention, do not appear to become involved personally with frequently absent students except perhaps by lowering their grades (Item 18, Table 12).

The question of teacher satisfaction also appears, though less directly, in Item 39, "I have class cutting reasonably well controlled in my classes." The finding here--that more teachers in the low-absence group than in the high-absence group agreed--is perhaps to be expected. The more interesting and less accountable finding is that fully half of the teachers

in the high-absence group (and nearly as many in the middle-absence group) reported that they, too, had their students' class cutting "reasonably well controlled." This agreement, other than as a "protected" response,[14] suggests acceptance of a high rate of absences in their classes. "Acceptance," however, does not really seem to describe accurately the attitude of the large majority of our teachers. However, their response that their students' class cutting was under control is not entirely accurate either. Teacher responses to a number of other questionnaire items clearly do not support either contention. There is a third possibility: teachers may have been unaware of the extent of their students' absences. As responses to Item 10 (Table 11) indicate, more teachers, in fact, estimated higher percentages of their students as absent than actually were, and roughly 90 percent agreed that class cutting was a problem in the school (Item 28, Table 14). Only a third of all teachers reported improved class attendance over prior years (Item 6, Table 11). Eighty percent of all teachers apparently believed that students "can get around penalties for class cutting" (Item 31, Table 14). Nearly the same number reported that sizeable proportions (40 percent and above) of students' reasons for absence were <u>not</u> legitimate. All these responses are indications of problem recognition. The claim by the majority of teachers that they have class cutting reasonably well under control in their classrooms contradicts their responses to other related questions.

6. <u>School Attendance and Discipline Beliefs.</u> A final set of items concern teachers' beliefs about attendance more generally throughout their school and methods for dealing with it. Though our discussion here will be primarily based on our teacher responses to the student absence questionnaire listed in Table 14, where relevant, reference will be made to items reported on earlier.

TABLE 14

School Attendance and Discipline Beliefs Reported by Low, Middle and High Absence Teachers

	Item	Alternative	Teacher Absence Group Low	Middle	High
28.	Class cutting is a problem in this school	strongly agree	39	46	50
		agree	48	45	46
		disagree	13	9	4
27.	Tardiness is a problem in this school	strongly agree	28	30	36
		agree	47	51	50
		disagree	24	19	14
11.	Enforcement by administrators of penalties for unexcused absences	generally strict	17	11	9
		generally lenient	39	41	42
		mixed	15	23	22
		don't know	28	26	26
31.	Students can get around penalties for class cutting and tardiness	strongly agree	26	31	30
		agree	56	50	52
		disagree	17	17	19
25.	If all teachers would regularly enforce rules, we'd quickly reduce absenses	strongly agree	33	32	27
		agree	38	35	38
		disagree	29	33	34
24.	If we want to reduce class cutting, we need stronger penalties	strongly agree	52	58	60
		agree	29	31	28
		disagree	20	12	12
26.	Schools better off in chronically absent studenta simply dropped or transferred	strongly agree	29	24	29
		agree	39	37	31
		disagree	33	39	40
14.*	Importance of students learning to make their own decisions	not important	6	4	2
		somewhat important	7	4	11
		fairly important	11	18	21
		very important	74	73	65
40.	Seeds of truancy sown early and H.S. teachers can hardly "reverse the situation."	strongly agree	8	7	13
		agree	29	28	25
		disagree	63	63	83
14.	The most payoff in reducing absences in out school would result if we...	enforced make-up time penalty	39	25	40
		automatically reduced grades/credit	42	52	40
		ended excused-unexcused distinctions	7	9	6
		gave teachers absentee lists sooner	2	1	1
		none of these would help much	10	12	3

*This item used in 1984 was replaced by Item 14 below in the 1985 questionnaire.

On the whole, we find very few differences among the proportions of teachers from the three absence groups choosing the various response options to the Table 14 items. A very high percentage of teachers agreed with the two most general items, "class cutting is a problem in our school" (Item 28) and "tardiness is a problem in our school" (Item 27). For the "class cutting" item, the rate of agreement was 87, 91, and 96 percent of teachers in the low-, middle-, and high-absence groups, respectively. The difference between the proportions is most apparent in the "strongly agree" response, which was selected by 39 percent of the low-absence group and 50 percent of the high-absence group. Item 27, regarding tardiness, received slightly smaller proportions of agreement (around 80 percent of teachers responded that tardiness was a problem in their school), and there were some minor differences in responses from the low- and high-absence groups of teachers. Incidentally, this general pattern of slightly lower but otherwise similar teacher responses occurred for all pairings of items concerning absences and tardies, such as Items 6, 7, 9, and 10, which concern number of absences and tardies, and Items 17 and 19, which concern detention and other penalties for absences. Interitem correlations (computed for the total 1984 teacher sample) between these and similar pairs were among the highest of all interitem correlations, ranging from .36 to .65. Clearly, many teachers perceived these two student behaviors as closely related, though in all schools administrators expressed much more concern with student absences than with tardiness.[15] It is also quite probable that less administrative support (or concern) is available to the teacher regarding his or her tardy students; to a large extent, lateness, as contrasted with absence, is left for the teacher to deal with.

Only a small percentage of teachers in any absence group (1 out of 6 of the low-absence group and 1 out of 10 in the other two groups) described

their administrators as "generally strict in enforcing penalties for unexcused absences" (Item 11). Roughly three to four times as many described them as "lenient." More teachers in all three groups reported "mixed" or "don't know." It should be noted that, consistent with previously reported changes related to administrators, there was a substantial increase in reporting of administrators as strict in the 1985 questionnaire administration. However, this change (from 7 percent to 20 percent) was confined to the low- and middle-absence groups. This low proportion of teachers describing their administrators as strict is consistent with the responses of over 80 percent of teachers in all three groups reporting that students "can get around penalties for class cutting and tardiness" (Item 31). Approximately two-thirds of the teachers in all groups also agreed that "if all teachers would regularly enforce attendance rules, we would quickly see a reduction in absences" (Item 25). Recalling that practically every teacher described himself or herself as "strictly enforcing the rules" (Item 22), this seems to place the blame, somewhat inappropriately, on others. It perhaps needs to be added that on the 1985 questionnaire administration, 10 percent fewer teachers in the low- and middle-absence groups supported this belief that other teachers needed to become stricter. But more generally, as indicated by the high 80 percent agreement to Item 24 in all three teacher groups, the very popular and persisting belief is that we "need stronger penalties" if we want to reduce class cutting.

A supporting belief also held by the larger portion of teachers in all groups (ranging from 61 to 68 percent) is that "the school is better off when chronically absent students simply drop out of school or transfer" (Item 26). On the other hand, an inconsistency is introduced by the response to Item 14, which stresses individual decision making and responsibility. In the sense that "stronger penalties" reduce students' "learning to make their

own decisions about obeying rules," the fact that over 70 percent of the teachers responded that this learning was "very important" contradicts the responses from the very large plurality favoring "strong penalties." It is probable that contradictions such as these have contributed to the problem of inconsistent enforcements of rules, a problem common to all our sample schools.

Item 14 in Table 14 required teachers to select one of four alternatives that would have "the most payoff in your school in reducing absences." This item was introduced into the second (1985) questionnaire administration, partly on the basis of a listing more of promising practices reported on an add-on page by our questionnaire sample of teachers (see deJung and Duckworth. 1985).

Nearly all teachers chose one of two response items, "reducing grades or credits" or "enforcing a make-up time penalty." Though these teachers apparently thought that one or the other of these penalties would "pay off" since few chose "none of the above." it is not clear how much improvement they expected. Since sizeable majorities of teachers in all groups agreed that "the school would be better off" without chronically absent students (Item 26), it is likely that the expected payoff was not for all students but for the less troublesome. These "chronically absent" students are also perhaps the reference group for the nearly 40 percent of teachers agreeing with the final item on the questionnaire (Item 40), which proposed that "the seeds of truancy are generally sown before high school, and we can hardly be expected to reverse the situation." The 63 percent of teachers <u>disagreeing</u> with this statement was identical in all three absence groups. This majority view is perhaps more optimistic than much of our other data suggests.

Summary of Findings

1. Recapitulation. This paper has examined the high school students' absences as they relate to teachers. Our main unit of analysis was the classroom teacher, though we occasionally referred to differences among classes taught by the same teacher. Our data source was the nearly two years of grade and absence reports of students in six high schools in two larger school districts in the Northwest. These data were supplemented with schoolwide attendance surveys and interviews of administrators, teachers, and students. In all, some 10,000 students, 500 teachers, and 50 administrators and school counselors contributed data to the project. This report is one in a set of summaries of our findings and interpretations of that data.

Our working hypothesis was that the teacher makes a difference in the attendance behavior of his or her students. We developed a class absence measure, AB (class), by dividing the number of absences reported at the end of the school term, by the number of students enrolled. Our basic index was the teacher's overall class absence rate, AB (teacher), the average of these class absence measures for all classes taught by that teacher that term.

We first examined the stability of that teacher index over repeated terms of data collection and reported moderately high correlations (median r = .67) for this rating for consecutive items. These correlations decreased only slightly for year-to-year comparisons and for comparisions of nonconsecutive terms in different school years. These decreases were expected because, apart from possible changes in teacher behaviors (relevant to student attendance), both course assignments and student membership also changed during these extended intervals.

We concluded that the teachers' overall class absence rate was a relatively stable measure that suggested a primary effect of the teacher upon

his or her students' absences. However, we also noted considerable variability among the class absence rates of individual teachers. We found that most teachers had at least one class with much better attendance or at least one class with much poorer attendance each term. This was as true for teachers with overall lower absence rates as it was for teachers with higher absence rates. We concluded, however, that these within-teacher differences or variations did not substantially impede our classifications of teachers into low-, middle-, or high-absence groups.

We next considered a number of variables that might have contributed to our absence rating. The first variable we considered was the subject being taught, which we examined in terms of department differences. Our comparisons of departments in terms of their student absences revealed that departments generally maintained their relative position as either a high-, middle-, or low-absence department from term to term and from school to school. In our sample of six schools, the departments of fine arts, science, and foreign language typically had the lowest absence rates; and the industrial education, home economics, and health education departments typically had the highest absence rates. Again we found considerable intradepartment variation; nearly all departments had some teachers with much better student attendance than other teachers in the same department. Though our first analyses established some departments with consistently higher or lower student attendance, there was a preponderance of evidence that considerable within-department variation existed. No department had a corner on teachers with either good or poor student attendance. Nor did all of a department's teachers have either uniformly high or uniformly low student attendance records. Teacher differences were perhaps moderated, but not determined, by what they taught.

Next, we explored how the ability level of students might account for

differences in class absence rates. Our analysis involved controls by department and by teacher. We limited our comparisons to classes taught within the same department and by the same teacher. Within this framework we compared absences in classes enrolling primarily lower-ability students, those enrolling mixed-ability students, and those enrolling higher-ability students. The results of these comparisons indicated fewer absences in "harder" classes for higher-ability students and more absences in classes for students with lower ability levels. However, individual teacher variation was again clearly present. Some teachers apparently were able to maintain low absence rates (or obliged to settle for high absence rates) independent of their class's designation as "hard," "slow," or "average." These exceptions aside, the analysis confirms that given the same teacher and subject area, classes designed for higher-ability students have lower absence rates than classes designed for lower-ability students.

We also looked for the possible effects of class size, the total number of students taught, grades received by students, and time of day upon class absences. Neither class size (which in our data ranged from 10 to 42 students) nor number of students taught (which ranged from around 50 to nearly 200 per teacher) was found to affect class absences substantively. Our examination of period absences revealed that absences were more frequent during the period after lunch and the first period of the day. Surprisingly, they were not particularly high during the last period of the day. But these period differences were all relatively small compared to the considerable variation in class absences within every period. A further finding here was that in all periods about one-fourth of the students had very few absences (for whichever classes they were taking that period) but that these near-perfect attendance patterns were infrequently maintained for all classes taken by a student. We also found that in every period there were nearly as

many students with relatively high numbers of absences. We surmised on the basis of other analyses of these students that these were "failing" students.

The relationship between grades a teacher distributed in his or her classes and class attendance was a more difficult one to sort out. We obtained a number of moderately high negative correlations of -.50 and above, which clearly indicates that higher grades were given in classes with fewer absences. Also, teachers who gave higher grades had lower average class absence rates. Data provided by teacher self-description surveys and by examination of absence patterns of failing students tended to support the interpretation that lower grades are given to students "because" they are frequently absent from class rather than that students are absent from classes because they are failing.

The broad question of possible differences between teachers with lower student absence rates and teachers with higher student absence rates was explored using lower-, middle-, and upper-third groupings of teachers ranked (within schools) on their average class absences. These groupings of teachers were first used to identify possible differences between male and female teachers and between teachers with larger numbers of students and those with fewer students. No differences were found for either variable. The percentages of male and female teachers were very similar in the high-, middle-, and low-absence groups, as were the average numbers of students they taught. Our conclusion that teacher gender had no effect on student absences was also supported by generally similar student attendance rates (slightly favoring the male teachers) for the total sample of male and female teachers. No evidence that attendance rates varied with respect to teacher gender appeared in any analysis of the project data.

The differences between the responses from the low-absence and high-absence groups were also measured for the various items on a student

attendance questionnaire administered during both project years to all regular grade teachers in our six schools. This questionnaire included self-report items regarding the teachers' perception of classroom attendance patterns, their attendance monitoring practices, and their attendance-related discipline beliefs. For all items, comparisions were made among the proportions of teachers' responses in the low-, middle-, and high-absence groups. Though no strikingly large differences were found, a smaller, yet substantive, number of differences were noted. These included a proportionately greater number of teachers in the low-absence group reporting high percentages of their students planning to go to four-year colleges, showing interest in the subjects those teachers taught, and believing that more of their student absences were legitimate. An additional finding was that the majority of teachers in the high-absence group reported that most of their students were interested in the subjects those teachers taught. Apparently, student interest in the subject being taught did not, in itself, compel regular class attendance. The students' priorities must have been placed elsewhere.

As expected, teacher reports of the percentages of their students absent on an average day differed, with more teachers in the high-absence group reporting more of their students absent. The more interesting finding here was that most teachers in the low-absence group and sizeable proportions in the middle- and high-absence groups grossly overestimated their students' absences. Differences among the three teacher groups were, however, lacking with respect to changes in absences (and in tardies) in recent years. Approximately one-fourth of the teachers in all groups reported a decrease in these behaviors in the current year, almost as many reported an increase, and half the teachers in all groups reported "no change."

A further finding was that neither the number of years of teaching

experience nor years in their present school appeared at all related to the teachers' class absence rate.

Several interesting differences, however, were noted between the proportions of teachers in the low-absence group and the high-absence group reporting various classroom teaching practices. Twice as many teachers in the low-absence than in the high-absence group reported giving daily homework assignments in their classes, and more teachers in the low-absence group reported having a reputation as a teacher who makes heavy demands on students. Likewise, more teachers in the low-absence than the high-absence group reported greater flexibility in accommodating their slower students by modifying their scheduled class content and by regularly providing them with help outside of class. However, more teachers from the high-absence group reported adopting different learning goals and grading criteria for their slower students.

Fewer teachers in the low-absence group reported reducing their students' grades because of absences. There were few differences between the three absence groups, however, with respect to their more direct attendance monitoring practices. Teachers in all three groups were nearly unanimous in describing themselves as strictly enforcing attendance rules in their classes and in being concerned about accuracy in recording absences. Half the teachers in all groups reported that they regularly reported repeated unexcused absences to school counselors. Only about a fifth of the teachers in any group reported that they regularly assigned detention or other penalties for absences or tardies or that they regularly called the homes of their unexcused absent students.

It should be noted that teachers reported a reduction in penalizing students and reporting their absences to parents in the second year of our data collection. These changes were likely attributable, at least in part,

to improved, more centralized absence reporting and management of contacting parents in most of our project schools. In particular, two schools had newly installed computerized record keeping, and two others began using automated home phoning. These improvements notwithstanding, little change was reported either in attendance or amount of time teachers spent in dealing with their absent and tardy students. Possibly a more extended data collection period is needed to evaluate these points. Also, it may be that with more administrative support in attendance monitoring, teachers were persuaded or enabled to do other attendance-related tasks that they had been unwilling or unable to do previously. In any case, a change did occur in one area; in the second project year there was an increase in the teachers' satisfaction with both administrative support and leadership regarding their school's attendance problems. In all groups, positive reports of administrators increased from less than half to around two-thirds. Comparisons of teacher satisfaction in the low-absence and high-absence groups continued to favor the low-absence group, with more teachers in that group reporting satisfaction both project years.

Differences between teacher responses in the low- and high-absence groups with respect to having "class cutting reasonably well controlled in their classes" were as expected; more teachers in the low-absence group reported having "control" than in the high-absence group. The less easily explainable finding is that over half of teachers whose classes had the highest absence rates in their school nonetheless reported having class cutting under control. Since their responses to other questionnaire items indicated recognition and concern for the problem of class absences, their final statement of "having it reasonably under control" is unclear. One interpretation hinges on the word "reasonable." The teachers may have been suggesting that they were doing all that could be done and that a certain

baseline of class cutting was to be expected and that class cutting could have been worse.

Teacher responses to a questionnaire item concerning the history and reversibility of student absence perhaps relates here. In all groups, just over a third of the teachers agreed that truancy was beyond the teachers' ability to "reverse." On the other hand, two-thirds of the respondents agreed that teachers could play a dominant role in improving attendance; they responded favorably to an item that stated: "If all teachers would regularly enforce rules, we'd see a reduction in absences." A large majority of teachers in all absence groups agreed that stronger penalties were needed to reduce class cutting and that students were able to avoid penalties for unexcused absences. Only a small minority of teachers reported that their administrators were "strict" in enforcing penalties; three times as many reported that they were "lenient." Though nearly all teachers believed that stronger penalties should be given in dealing with absences, a large majority also believed that it was "very important" for students to learn how to make their own decisions about obeying rules. To the extent that differences between positions advocating "student decision making" and those advocating "stronger penalties" are not reconciled, enforcement of any school policy regarding student attendance will likely fail to receive the broad teacher acceptance that it requires for effective implementation. The fact that in both data-collection years nearly all teachers reported that class cutting and its enforcement were problems in their school hardly describes a widely accepted or working solution. A questionnaire item asking which of a few selected school actions would have "most payoff" in reducing absences received responses that were evenly split between approval of enforcing make-up time penalties and automatically reducing grades or credits. With respect to this item, as with previous items regarding attendance and

discipline beliefs, responses from teachers with lower rates of student absences in their classes were, at most, barely different from responses given by teachers with higher rates of student absences.

2. Final Statement. What can be said of teachers' effects on class absences? What has been learned from our data? We believe our evidence is firm in demonstrating that teachers are distinguishable with respect to their students' absence rates and that the differences among them maintain from term to term, though there may be some variations among classes taught by the same teacher.

We also conclude that subject matter (department) differences exist and persist from term to term and that there are some general patterns from school to school. Teacher differences, however, prevail over department differences; the subject being taught affects student attendance but not as much as does the teacher.

The ability level of the students in the class also affects absences. Teachers teaching "harder" courses offered primarily to students with higher ability levels almost always will have better attendance rates than they have in classes with students of mixed ability levels, and they will have even poorer student attendance rates in their classes designed for students with lower ability levels.

We found that none of the following variables affects student absences in any appreciable way: sex of teacher, size of class, total number of students taught, or period of day the class is taught. Period effects are small; effects of sex of teacher are nonexistent. Nor do years of experience or years in a particular school necessarily distinguish a teacher with fewer student absences from a teacher with more student absences.

Likewise, there are no apparent distinctions between teachers with "better" and "poorer" student attendance rates with respect to the following

teacher behaviors: teacher recognition of the problem of absenteeism, teacher self-reported strictness in enforcing attendance rules, accuracy in recording absences, reporting help from parents, frequency in calling parents, informing counselors, assigning penalties, reducing grades for repeated absences, or the amount of time the teacher spends on attendance matters.

Distinctions between teachers with lower and higher class absence rates are partially evident with respect to the proportion of the teacher's students who are college-bound and the degree to which teachers perceive their students as interested in the teacher's subject. Distinctions can also be partially made on the basis of daily assignments of homework, the teacher's reputation as a demanding teacher, the teacher's belief in sticking to a schedule, and his or her willingness to offer out-of-class help or adopt different goals for poorly performing students. Distinctions between teachers can only partially be made by the teacher's own estimates of his or her students' absences or tardies, or by the teacher's statement that "class cutting is controlled in my class."

None of these variables, however, provide sharp distinctions. What we have been listing as partially evident distinctions are based on 10 or 20 percent differences. Singly, as group separators, they are very weak variables. But together, these partial distinctions increase our attention toward more work-oriented classes and toward more student-centered and helpful teachers. Most of our small differences between responses of teachers in the low-absence group and high-absence group seem to relate to the one or the other.

There are further nondistinctions to report. Teachers with lower and higher class absence rates similarly agreed that teachers could not reverse the situation of truancy and agreed that their schools would be better off

without the chronically absent student. Teachers from the two groups were not distinguishable with respect to their satisfaction with their administrators' support or leadership, or with respect to their belief that enforcement of attendance rules in their school was weak, inconsistent, and needed tightening up. They all generally agreed that penalties needed to be stronger, though they all also concurred that it was important that students learn to make their own decisions.

In a word, we repeatedly found more similarities than differences among our teacher groups. The differences were minor; suggestive but hardly conclusive. Teachers with fewer student absences and those with more absences are nearly alike in what they think about absenteeism and in what they report they do about it. No particular class description or teacher practice, belief, or concern was at all unique to either our high-absence or low-absence group. It perhaps would have been unreasonable to expect otherwise of a professional cadre educated and trained under similar circumstances and working next to each other for years under very similar rules and regulations and expectations, and, in many instances, sharing the same administrators and the same students. The shared history of the public school teachers at the secondary level in our sample was so considerable that we perhaps should be more surprised that their students' absences were as different as they were.

However, our data is strong in reporting that teachers <u>are</u> distinguishable with respect to their students' absences. We know that the subject and students being taught are two factors that help determine the rate of student absences. However, we gathered no information on <u>how</u> the subject and the students were taught, or on <u>what</u> actually took place in the classroom and in other teacher-student interactions. We have no information on the importance made of the subject and of the student, on how either is

being managed and moved along, or on the attractions and detractions that are deliberately or incidentally introduced.

We suggest that a documented, insightful observational study of the classroom is needed as a next potentially productive step in studying student absences. We believe that teachers whose students elect to attend their classes regularly are different in ways we have yet to describe and confirm from teachers whose students choose to be absent. We agree that all absenteeism is not within the power of the teacher to control or change, but we believe there is more to know than we have learned, and it is important for us to know more if we are to succeed in reducing absenteeism.

Notes

[1]Aggregation of student absences by teacher as needed for computing AB (teacher) measures was much more costly for our data tapes for District I schools than for our District II schools. For this reason AB (teacher) measures for District I schools were computed only for those two terms coinciding with our two administrations of the Student Attendance Questionnaires.

[2]Though considerable between-school and between-district differences in AB (teacher) means are apparent in this data, as status earlier, these comparisons are nor readily interpretable and shall not be considered in this report.

[3]Calculations yielded matched ts of 17.91 (26 d.f.) for comparisons of average absences in lower-ability classes and all other classes taught and of 25.63 (31 d.f.) for comparisons of average absences in higher-ability and all other classes taught.

[4]As noted earlier, data from the two districts are not directly comparable for a number of reasons, including the length of the school term. More students were absent "full days" in the three District I schools (which had closed campuses) while a greater number of District II students (in schools with open campuses) appeared to have less than half-day absences. These and other between-district (and between-school) comparisons are discussed in Duckworth and deJung, 1986a).

[5]Personal communication regarding at-risk students was sent to the participating schools in June 1985. Our data analyses on such students is included in another project paper (deJung and Duckworth, 1986b).

[6]Nearly 100 percent of our teachers described themselves as "concerned to be as accurate as possible in my daily attendance records" and nearly as many said that they "strictly enforced attendance rules in my class."

[7]For a discussion of between-school differences and lack of differences see Duckworth and deJung (1986a).

[8]This was the case because teachers' overall class absence rates were generally stable from term to term in all six schools (see Table 1).

[9]Most of these teachers were from School F, which had a 70 percent college-bound student population.

[10]Indeed, some preliminary analyses of student self-reports of absences found very low correlations between the students' post high school plans and their reported absences. This lack of relationship, however, is countermanded by comparisons of students grouped into an upper fifth and lower fifth sample on the basis of their actual end-of-term attendance record. These comparisons revealed twice the number of students in the lowest absence group (43 percent) than in the highest absence group (21 percent) were enrolled primarily in college prep subjects. Further, four-year college-bound students accounted for the bulk (59 percent) of the lowest absence group students but only a third (34 percent) of the highest

absence group students.

[11]Complete results of this survey are discussed in other project reports (i.e., Duckworth and deJung, 1986b; and deJung and Duckworth, 1986b).

[12]Unfortunately, no data is available as to the success (and cost) of this type of action. Careful controls would certainly be needed to demonstrate a direct causal effect.

[13]For example, two schools began using the computerized phone message services.

[14]All teachers were assured of the "privacy" of their responses. Subsequent interviews with over 50 of these teachers indicated no particular teacher concern with our trustworthiness in guaranteeing privacy, though one teacher did not wish to be tape-recorded.

[15]Careful research is needed to clarify what may prove to be an important and correctable companion activity of repeatedly absent students. Our own student survey revealed that tardiness occurred three to four times as frequently among high-absence students than among low-absence students.

References

deJung, J., and Duckworth, K. (1985, Summer/Fall). New study looks at high school absenteeism. R&D Perspectives, pp. 1-8.

deJung, J, and Duckworth, K. (1986a). Measuring student absences in the high schools. Paper prepared for the AERA annual meeting, San Francisco.

deJung, J., and Duckworth, K. (1986b). Absences from class: A two-year study of student nonattendance in the high school. Eugene, OR: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon.

Duckworth, K., and deJung, J. (1986a). High school procedures for managing student absenteeism: Staff implementation and satisfaction and student response. Eugene, OR: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon.

Duckworth, K. and deJung, J. (1986b). Variations in student skipping: A study of six high schools. Eugene, OR: Center for Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon.

Appendix A

SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM STUDY--TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE (February 1985)

Dear Teacher: Please see the cover letter for directions. Use the enclosed answer sheet marked TEACHER to record your answers. For questions 1-14, select the answer that is most accurate for you and mark the corresponding letter next to the question number on your answer page.

1. How many years have you been teaching at this school?

   (A) Ten or more years
   (B) Six to nine years
   (C) Three to five years
   (D) One or two years
   (E) Less than a year

2. How many years have you been teaching altogether?

   (A) Ten or more years
   (B) Six to nine years
   (C) Three to five years
   (D) One or two years
   (E) Less than a year

3. How many classes do you teach on an average day?

   (A) One to three
   (B) Four
   (C) Five
   (D) Six or more
   (E) Other or does not apply

4. How many of your students would you say are likely to go on to a four-year college?

   (A) About 10% or fewer
   (B) About 20-30%
   (C) About 40-50%
   (D) About 60-70%
   (E) About 80% or more

5. How many of your students would you say are interested in the subjects you teach?

   (A) About 10% or fewer
   (B) About 20-30%
   (C) About 40-50%
   (D) About 60-70%
   (E) About 80% or more

6. How would you compare the number of unexcused absences in your classes in this school this year to those of last year?

   (A) More than last year
   (B) Less than last year
   (C) About the same
   (D) New here; don't know

7. How would you compare the number of tardies in your classes in this school this year to those last year?

   (A) More than last year
   (B) Less than last year
   (C) About the same
   (D) New here; don't know

8. How often do you give homework assignments in most of your classes?

   (A) Almost never
   (B) Less than once a week
   (C) About once a week
   (D) About 2-3 times a week
   (E) Almost daily

9. Thinking about all your classes, how many students are tardy on an average day?

   (A) Almost none
   (B) Fewer than 10%
   (C) About 10%
   (D) About 20%
   (E) More than 20%

10. Thinking about all your classes, how many students are absent on an average day?

    (A) Fewer than 10%
    (B) About 10%
    (C) About 20%
    (D) About 30%
    (E) More than 30%

11. How would you describe the way administrators at your school enforce penalties for unexcused absences?

    (A) Generally strict
    (B) Generally lenient
    (C) Strict in some cases, lenient in others
    (D) Neither strict nor lenient
    (E) Don't know

12. How much of your school day is taken up with identifying, recording, and following up on class absences or tardies?

    (A) One hour or more
    (B) About 45 minutes
    (C) About 30 minutes
    (D) About 15 minutes
    (E) About 10 minutes or less

13. How many student absences would you say are for reasons you regard as legitimate?

    (A) About one in five or less
    (B) About two in five
    (C) About three in five
    (D) About four in five
    (E) Nearly all

14. In your opinion, which would have the most payoff in your school in reducing absences?

    (A) Schoolwide enforcement of a make up TIME penalty
    (B) Automatic grade or credit reduction of absences
    (C) Dropping distinctions between excused and unexcused absences
    (D) More rapid return of absentee lists to teachers
    (E) None of these would help much

PLEASE TURN TO THE OTHER SIDE AFTER YOU FINISH THIS SIDE

For questions 15–20, please select the letter that best describes your practice and mark the corresponding letter next to the question number on the answer page.	As a regular procedure	On occasion	Hardly ever	Does not apply
15. How often do you call the student's home for repeated unexcused absences?	A	B	C	D
16. How often do you inform the student's counselor for repeated unexcused absences?	A	B	C	D
17. How often do you keep the student after school or assign other penalties for repeated unexcused absences?	A	B	C	D
18. How often do you reduce the student's grade for repeated unexcused absences?	A	B	C	D
19. How often do you keep the student after school or assign other penalties for tardiness?	A	B	C	D
20. How often do you provide special help to students outside class time when they have done poorly on work?	A	B	C	D

Next, please select the letter that best describes how much you agree or disagree with statements 21–40 and mark the corresponding letter next to the question number on the answer page.	Strongly Agree A	Agree B	Disagree C	Strongly Disagree D
21. I am satisfied with the support I get from administrators and counselors in handling class absence problems.	A	B	C	D
22. I strictly enforce the rules on attendance in my class.	A	B	C	D
23. Recording student tardiness is a low-pay-off and time-consuming chore.	A	B	C	D
24. If we want to reduce class cutting, we need stronger penalties.	A	B	C	D
25. If all teachers would regularly enforce attendance rules, we would quickly see a reduction in absences.	A	B	C	D
26. The school is better off when chronically-absent students simply drop out of school or transfer.	A	B	C	D
27. Class tardiness is a problem in this school.	A	B	C	D
28. Class cutting is a problem in this school.	A	B	C	D
29. I am concerned to be as accurate as possible in my daily attendance records.	A	B	C	D
30. No student who is frequently absent from class should be able to receive full credit or an A grade.	A	B	C	D
31. Students who work at it can get around the penalties for class cutting and tardiness.	A	B	C	D
32. I have the reputation of being a teacher who makes heavy demands on students.	A	B	C	D
33. It is important to me that my students attend class on time.	A	B	C	D
34. Our school administrators have provided effective leadership in dealing with attendance problems.	A	B	C	D
35. Parents help me in reducing student absences from my classes.	A	B	C	D
36. I believe in sticking to my schedule of content to be covered in class rather than slowing the pace of instruction for students who are behind.	A	B	C	D
37. I believe that the school has a special responsibility to students who are failing their schoolwork.	A	B	C	D
38. I adopt different learning goals and grading criteria for students who consistently do poorly on tests and assignments.	A	B	C	D
39. I believe I have class cutting reasonably well controlled in my classes.	A	B	C	D
40. The "seeds of truancy" are generally sown before high school career and we can hardly be expected to reverse the situation.	A	B	C	D

PLEASE SEE THE COLORED SHEET FOR LISTING "SPECIAL ACTIONS" TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE.