

**THE EFFECTS OF AN ANNUAL DISCRETIONARY LEAVE POLICY ON
TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IN A LARGE SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy would improve full-time certificated teacher absenteeism rates in a large suburban school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area. This study examined full-time, certificated teacher absences during the 2006-07 school year when the new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented, compared to the 2005-06 school year when the former sick/personal leave policy was in effect. The collection of teacher absenteeism data focused on absences throughout the week, as well as the ability of the new annual discretionary leave policy to curb teacher absences on Mondays and Fridays. Data acquired from the school district indicated that the school district experienced its greatest need for substitute teachers on these two days. A *t* test for independent variables was conducted to analyze the data.

The findings for this study of a large suburban school district in Missouri indicated there was a statistically significant negative effect on the full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates in the district between 2005-06 and 2006-07. This included all research hypotheses of teacher absenteeism for Mondays through Fridays, as well as Mondays and Fridays, in elementary, middle, or high school after implementation of the annual discretionary leave policy.

Dedication

To my boys -
You are my inspiration.

With much love,

- Mommy

And...

To all those who believed in me...

Thank you,

Suzanne

Acknowledgements

This dissertation marks the end of a journey I once thought would be impossible to complete. It signifies the closing of yet another chapter in my life, while at the same time is the beginning of a new chapter of many exciting things still to come. It is the culmination of a vision I held for myself that could not have been achieved, had it not been for the support and special encouragement of many people. In achieving a goal of this magnitude, I recognize that I could not have accomplished it alone: this study represents not only a personal achievement, but also an accomplishment of my support network of family, friends, and colleagues. Any attempt to express my appreciation and gratitude seems quite inadequate at this point.

This study and the completion of the program would not have been possible without Dr. Susan Rogers, my advisor and instructor. Dr. Rogers worked timely and efficiently to help prepare me to succeed in this journey. Without her focused attention and efforts, this study would not have become a reality. Special thanks are also due to Dr. Dan Clemens: colleague, friend, and member of my dissertation committee. I would have fallen short of my goal if not for his support, his encouragement, and his refusal to give up on me when I was at my lowest. He consistently reminded me of the importance of perseverance. I also wish to express appreciation to the other members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Ann Sanders and Dr. Dan Falvey. Dr. Sanders stepped in at the last moment to provide comments, suggestions, and support in the completion of this study.

Dr. Karl Krawitz was crucial in the completion of this study. He was a guiding force in the statistical portion of the project. Without his insistent demands for excellence, knowledge, and expertise, this study would not have been possible.

A special thank you to each of my professors at Baker University that I was fortunate enough to have throughout the doctoral program. I have been able to take something special from each class and apply it to real life. For this, I am very grateful.

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Thank you to my parents, Rick and Mary Boyer, who instilled the importance of education in me at an early age and who always demanded the best from me. I definitely would not be where I am today without their love, support, and belief in me. My hope is that I can provide those things for my two sons as you did for me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teacher absenteeism is a major issue facing school districts throughout the country. One statewide study conducted by Norton found that 71% of Arizona school personnel directors reported teacher absenteeism as one of the leading employee issues they face yearly (95). According to a nationwide study involving 470 school districts conducted by Porwell for the Educational Research Service (ERS) on teacher absenteeism, a teacher is absent an average of eight days per year (5). Some studies suggested that this number exceeds the absentee rate of other professions (R. Glass; Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce 6; Olson 89; Trejos 32). A study conducted by the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce found that 66% of the school districts studied were in excess of the 2-4% illness range, which is the commonly accepted range in the industrial field (6). Lewis further suggested that it is no longer uncommon to see a 10-15% absentee rate of teachers in schools (29). According to Unicomb, teacher absenteeism is an understudied issue (33).

Teacher absenteeism costs school districts millions of dollars each year. The budgetary cost of paying for both absent and substitute teachers increases each year, with higher salaries, higher substitute pay, and incentive plans (Norton 98). In the early 1980s, Lewis (30) calculated the aggregate financial cost to school districts associated with the replacement of regular classroom teachers with substitute teachers to be approximately \$2 billion a year nationwide. With teacher salaries being higher today than in the 1980s, it does not take much to see the cost of teacher absenteeism has multiplied significantly.

In addition to having a substantial impact on the financial resources of a school district, teacher absenteeism directly influences the ability of students to be successful in school.

Not only does the financial cost of teacher absenteeism take a toll on school districts and students, but the utilization of substitute teachers also affects students and their learning. Malick stated, “Classroom continuity, student orientation, curriculum, and classroom routine are all negatively impacted by the replacement of a regular teacher” (1). Furthermore, he indicated that daily substitute teachers lack perceived authority, have no direct influence on grades, and are unfamiliar with individual students and classroom procedures (1). Rundall found that teacher absenteeism might be one of the problems that have the greatest effect on education: teacher absenteeism is critical and affects the continuity of instruction provided to students (5). Smith discovered that high teacher absenteeism had a negative impact on the math and reading achievement of elementary school students; because of this relationship, he suggested schools would be negligent if they did not address the issue of teacher attendance (127). In addition, Zafirau discovered that the most successful secondary schools in Cleveland, Ohio, were those that had a lower teacher absentee rate (12). Meara found in her study of the Chicago Public Schools that the more successful schools spent more time on task, which led Meara to conclude that the regular classroom teacher was more likely to produce a less interrupted learning period for the student, thus reducing time off task and resulting in a more successful school (2). In essence, teachers must be present for students to acquire the instructional curriculum.

Background

The North Kansas City School District, honored for “Distinction in Performance” by the State of Missouri, is a suburban school district located five miles north of downtown Kansas City, Missouri. The school district covers an 82-square-mile area and has a student population of 17,405 housed in one early childhood site, twenty elementary school sites, five middle school sites, three high school sites, and one alternative education site.

The average daily attendance across the district was 93.8%. The free and reduced lunch percentages ranged from 13% to 69% across the district. Table 1 provides total enrollments and free and reduced lunch percentages for the levels of schools and total levels for the North Kansas City School District as of November 2006.

Table 1

North Kansas City School District Enrollments and Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages

School Level and Enrollment	Free	% Free	Reduced	% Reduced	Total Free/ Reduced	% Combined
Elementary						
7834	2242	28.6%	1004	12.8%	3246	41.4%
Middle						
4058	1018	25.1%	526	13.0%	1544	38.0%
High School						
5513	1004	18.2%	557	10.1%	1561	28.3%
Total						
17405	4264	24.5%	2087	12.0%	6351	36.5%

Source: North Kansas City School District, Food and Nutrition Services, 2006.

Figure 1 is a map of the North Kansas City School District, showing the locations of each of the 32 educational centers.

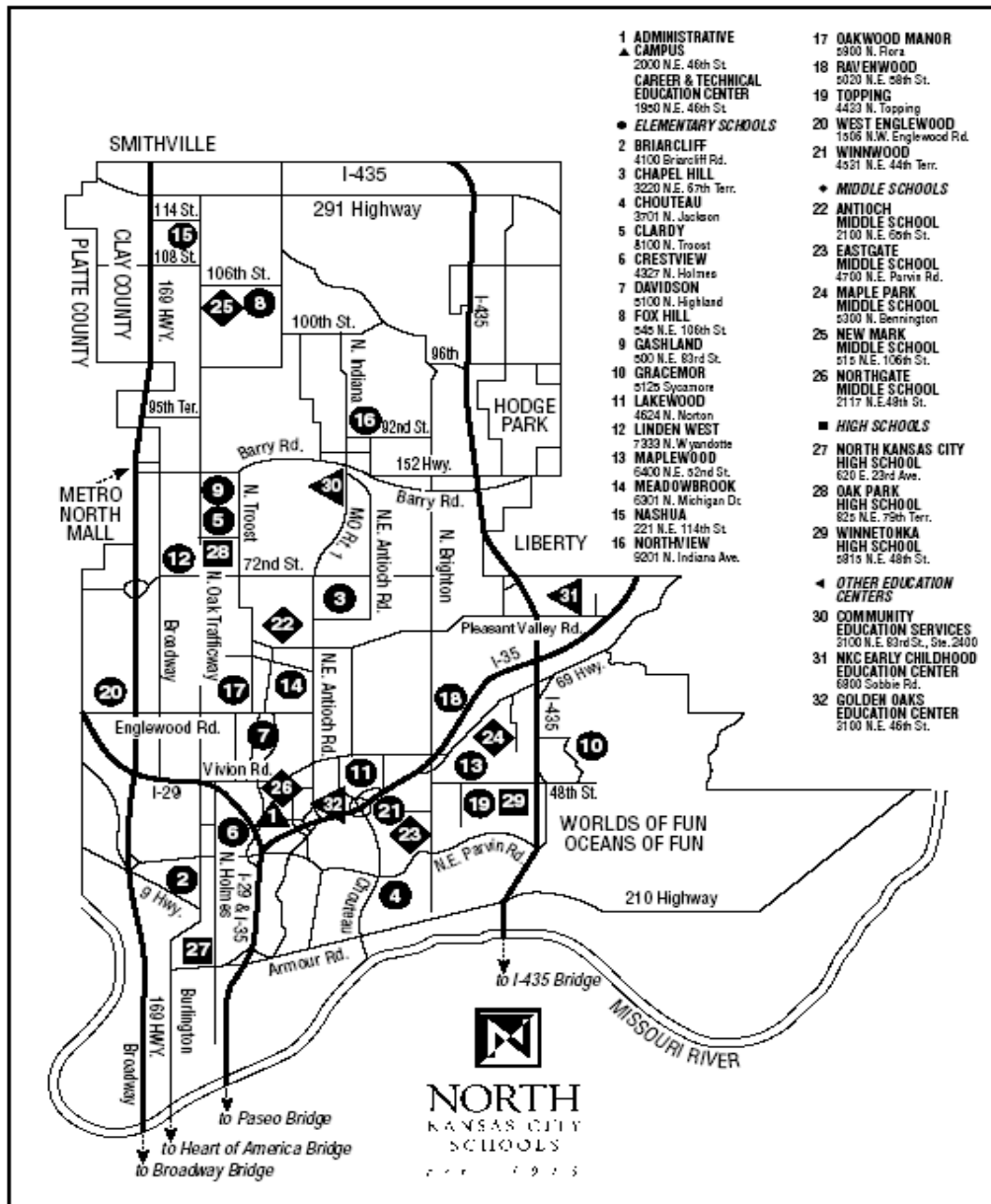


Fig. 1. North Kansas City School District map of educational facilities

Source: North Kansas City School District (Community Relations Department: 2005 District Report Card—Achieving Excellence, December 2005).

The district employed 1,320 full-time, certificated teachers for 2005-06 and 1,267 full-time, certificated teachers in 2006-07, the years in which this study took place. Classified, or support staff, equaled 1,265 for 2005-06 and 1,251 for 2006-07. The certificated category for the 2005-06 school year held 653 elementary teachers, 321 middle school teachers, and 346 high school teachers. During the 2006-07 school year, the district employed 617 elementary teachers, 325 middle school teachers, and 325 high school teachers. See Table 2 for the district composition of teachers by level.

Table 2

North Kansas City School District Staff Composition for 2005-06 and 2006-07

	Elementary Certificated	Middle Certificated	High Certificated	Total Certificated	Classified Staff
2005-06	653	321	346	1,320	1,265
2006-07	617	325	325	1,267	1,251

Source: North Kansas City School District SmartFind Express Employee Management System, May 2007.

Over the past five years, the North Kansas City School District spent an increasing amount of money on substitute teachers for certificated staff members taking leave for personal reasons (illness, family leave, bereavement leave, personal leave, etc.). As this expenditure increases, money for other costs in the district decreases and budget efficiency is affected. When considering the most important factor of this business, students, this concern needs attention. Data from the North Kansas City School District

SmartFind Express Employee Management System confirmed that Mondays and Fridays had increasing rates of certificated teacher absenteeism.

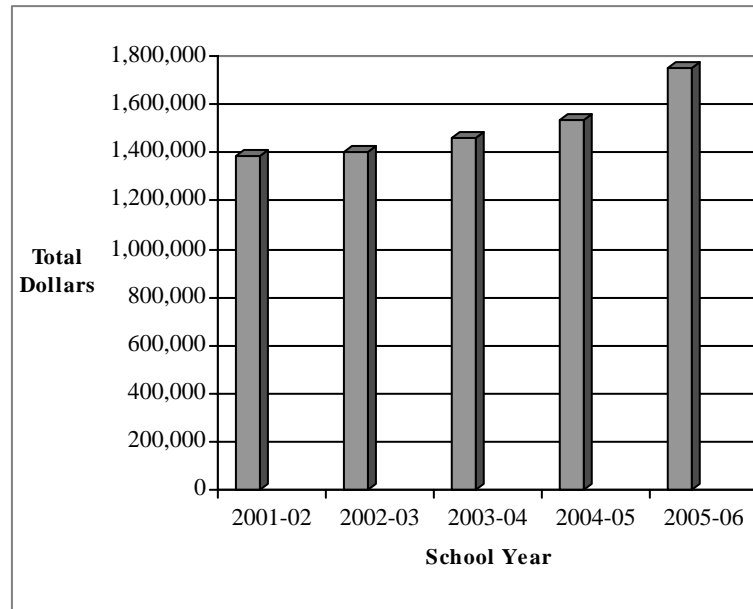


Fig. 2 North Kansas City School District substitute teacher costs, 2001-2006

Source: North Kansas City School District, Business & Finance Department, 2006.

The historical data of absenteeism rates of full-time certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District are not available; the data begin for the 2005-06 school year. The reason for this inability to retrieve past data stems from a change in software and programs to manage employee information. The historical data was entered by hand when the transition to SmartFind Express Employee Management System took place: due to the time constraints of this task, district administrators decided to enter data from only one year prior to the policy change. See Table 3 for the absences of elementary, middle, and high school full-time certificated teachers during the 2005-06 school year in the North Kansas City School District.

Table 3

Total Absences for 2005-06 Full-time Certificated Teachers

School Level	Total Absences	Monday/Friday Absences	Monday/Friday Absences %
Elementary	3,413	1,539	45.09
Middle	1,606	718	44.71
High	1,541	730	47.37

Source: North Kansas City School District SmartFind Express Employee Management System, July 2006.

The North Kansas City School District Collaborative Teacher Team Negotiations (CTTN) recommended a change for absences for personal reasons by passing a new policy titled “Annual Discretionary Leave” (ADL). The objectives of the new policy are to:

1. Recognize employees contributions by empowering them to be responsible for their attendance,
2. Decrease the categories and complexity of the current system,
3. Provide incentives and recognition to employees for being on the job to meet student needs,
4. Provide employees with increased flexibility, compensation, and leave benefits,
5. Improve communication between employees and supervisors regarding meeting the students’ needs, and

6. Provide incentives for employees to be at work serving the students and to reduce the Monday and Friday demand for substitutes (North Kansas City School District CTTN “Just the Facts...In Brief,” March 2006).

Flexibility in the new policy allows staff members to decide how to use their ten days of paid leave each year. This change eliminates all previously existing categories (personal, illness, and family). In addition to the ten paid days of leave, each certificated staff member receives three additional days for bereavement. One added feature of the new policy is an attendance incentive provided to each certificated staff member. The incentive provides a cash payout at the end of the school year of \$90 per day (up to ten days) for every paid leave day not used. Each full-time, certificated teacher also has the opportunity to earn an extra paid leave day for each semester of perfect attendance. These two extra days are paid at the same rate of \$90 per day at the end of the year.

The North Kansas City School District collaborated with the district’s Partners in Education (PIE) program to recognize perfect attendance. This organization supports the incentive portion of the policy by:

1. Printing staff members’ names in the North Kansas City School District *Northland Pride* newsletter (printing and mailing costs paid for by PIE), which is sent to all stakeholders within the boundaries of the school district.
2. Providing “Perfect Attendance” plaques for individuals earning this award at the annual North Kansas City School District Traditions of Excellence in Education program held in May of each school year.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy improved full-time, certificated teacher attendance in the North Kansas City School District. This study examined full-time, certificated teacher absences for the 2006-07 school year when the new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented, compared to the 2005-06 school year when the former sick/personal leave policy was in effect. Records of teacher absences across the working week were analyzed to discern the ability of the new annual discretionary leave policy to curb teacher absences both overall and on Mondays and Fridays. Past data acquired from the school district indicated that the school district experiences its greatest need for substitute teachers on these two days. The new annual discretionary leave policy that took effect on July 1, 2006, contained several different features from the former policy. “Just the Facts...In Brief” by the North Kansas City School District Collaborative Teachers Team Negotiations recommended the following items for the new policy:

1. Incentives and recognition for perfect attendance
2. Providing full-time certificated teachers with more flexibility, compensation and leave benefits
3. Direct calling to a supervisor for absences on Mondays and Fridays not approved ahead of time

Regardless of the type of situation, all teachers were required to call the automated SmartFind Express Employee Management System.

Overview of Methodology

The purpose of this study was to see if the new annual discretionary leave policy had an effect on overall teacher absenteeism, especially on Mondays and Fridays. Teacher absenteeism data was provided through the district's computer information system: the SmartFind Express Employee Management System. Data from the 2006-07 school year was compared to teacher absenteeism data from 2005-06. A pre-test/post-test *t* test for independent variables was conducted to analyze the data. To complete the comparisons, the researcher analyzed absenteeism data of:

1. Full-time, certificated teachers for Mondays through Fridays from the 2005-06 school year and the 2006-07 school year,
2. Full-time, certificated teachers on Mondays and Fridays between the 2005-06 school year and the 2006-07 school year,
3. Full-time, certificated teachers at the elementary school level (pre-kindergarten through fifth grades) for the school years 2005-06 and 2006-07,
4. Full-time, certificated teachers at the middle school level (sixth through eighth grades) for the school years of 2005-06 and 2006-07, and
5. Full-time, certificated teachers at the high school level (ninth through twelfth grades) for the school years 2005-06 and 2006-07.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the development of the literature review. The literature review in Chapter Two provides background knowledge and research on

the subject of teacher and employee absenteeism and policies, which may affect absenteeism in the school district or workplace. Three main research questions guided this study of the North Kansas City School District:

1. Did implementing a new annual discretionary leave policy affect certificated teacher absenteeism?
2. Did implementing a new annual discretionary leave policy affect certificated teacher absenteeism on Mondays and Fridays?
3. Did implementing a new annual discretionary leave policy affect elementary, middle, or high school certificated teacher absenteeism?

Hypotheses

Research hypotheses are a vital part of the study. The hypotheses identify the questions tested in this study. Calabrese stated, “Use the hypothesis to define and operationalize your study’s variables” (10). The following hypotheses delineated the variables for the study:

H₁: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

H₂: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

H₃: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected teacher absenteeism rates of elementary, middle, or high school full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

“Limitations identify potential weaknesses in the study’s research design or methodology that restrict the study’s scope” (Colorado State University): whereas the University of South Dakota reported, “delimitations are the self-imposed boundaries that you use to delimit the scope of your study.” Listed below are the limitations and delimitations of the study:

1. The study was delimited to one school district, North Kansas City School District No. 74, Kansas City, Missouri.
2. The study was delimited to the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years.
3. The study did not examine the causation for teacher absenteeism.
4. The study did not examine the characteristics of teachers with higher absenteeism rates.
5. The study was limited to full-time, certificated teachers in the school district. Classified employees were not a part of this study.
6. Administrators were not included in this study.
7. The study was limited to personal reasons for absences (illness, family, emergency, personal leaves). This study did not involve the absences for school business days, workshops, conferences, jury duty, and so on.

8. The study did not examine the indirect cost of teacher absenteeism as it related to factors such as student achievement and other teaching and learning outcomes.

Assumptions

The selection of a quantitative research design for conducting this study caused the researcher to make assumptions concerning the data gathered. In Calabrese's book The Elements of an Effective Dissertation and Thesis he stated, "Most researchers make assumptions related to their study to guide their inquiry. In research, well-constructed assumptions add to the study's legitimacy" (14). Assumptions for this study are:

1. All teacher absenteeism data retrieved from the district's SmartFind Express Employee Management System is authentic and accurate.
2. Building administrators across the district accurately explained the policy and program in complete form to all certificated teachers.
3. All building administrators implemented the new annual discretionary leave policy following board-approved procedures.
4. All full-time, certificated teachers received the annual discretionary leave policy, the incentive plan, and all supplements, explaining in detail the contents of the policy.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are referenced in this study and are defined as follows:

Annual Discretionary Leave (ADL): Refers to the term Annual Discretionary Leave (North Kansas City School District Policy GCBDA).

Absenteeism rate: The rate at which a certificated teacher is not present at the appropriate time and place to meet the requirements of a contract (North Kansas City School District Policy GCBDA).

Attendance: The presence of the teacher at the appropriate time and place in accordance with the requirements of a contract (North Kansas City School District Policy GCBDA).

Certificated teacher: A teacher who holds a certificate to teach in the state of Missouri for a given area; for example, grade 1-5 certificate is for the teaching of grades 1-5 (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

CTTN: The group referred to as the Collaborative Teacher Team Negotiations, which has members representing all certificated categories of employment in the school district (administrators, core teachers, encore teachers, special education teachers) for the purposes of making recommendations to the Board of Education.

Elementary school: A school including grades kindergarten through five (North Kansas City School District Policy JC).

Free-and-reduced lunch guidelines: The US Department of Agriculture has established regulations to carry out the intent of Congress that nutritious meals and milk be made available to every school student regardless of the household's ability to pay. Guidelines are set for school officials responsible for determining eligibility for free-and-

reduced price meals in schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfasts Program (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

Full-time certificated teacher: A teacher who holds a certificate to teach in the state of Missouri for a given area, (i.e., grade 1-5 certificate allows a teacher to teach grade 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) and who works a total of 2100 minutes per school week for at least 184 days per school year (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

High school: A school including grades nine through twelve (North Kansas City School District Policy JC).

Incentive program: A plan developed and implemented to increase teacher attendance (North Kansas City School District Policy GCBDA).

Middle school: A school including grades six through eight (North Kansas City School District Policy JC).

PIE: Partners in Education; the North Kansas City School District's business and community partnership program that provides scholarships to students and grant opportunities to teachers, and seeks out and coordinates business community partnerships for schools in the district.

School business absences: Absences related to school or district conferences, in or out of district training, in-service training, and similar events (North Kansas City School District Policy GCBDA).

SmartFind Express Employee Management System: Computer system and software used by the North Kansas City School District, which tracks all employee information including personal information, district-related information (school site,

years of experience, years in district, etc.), certificates held, absence reports, salary, and payroll.

Socioeconomic status (SES): SES is the determining factor for whether a student qualifies for a free-or-reduced lunch rate. For example, a family of four whose income ranges from \$26,845 to \$38,203 per year would qualify for the reduced lunch plan meals, whereas a family of four with an income less than \$26,844 per year would qualify for free lunch plan meals (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One includes an introduction to the study, background to the study, purpose and an overview of methodology, followed with the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter One includes limitations and delimitations, assumptions, and definitions of key terms used in this study.

Chapter Two is a review of selected relevant literature on the topic of teacher absenteeism. Included is discussion of the theoretical research on absenteeism, the extent of teacher absenteeism, and the effectiveness of incentive plans on the absenteeism rate of teachers.

Chapter Three is a presentation of the design of this study. The chapter provides the research design, hypotheses, population and demographics, data collection procedures, and data collection and statistical analysis.

Chapter Four is the statistical analysis of the data collected. This chapter illustrates the findings comparing the former sick/personal leave policy rates of

absenteeism of full-time, certificated teachers with the rates of absenteeism with the new annual discretionary leave policy.

Chapter Five is a summary of findings, interpretation of data, conclusions, recommendations for practical applications, and suggestions for future research in the area of certificated employee absenteeism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Teacher absenteeism...infiltrates the life of the entire school. It not only creates frustrations for the principal, but affects student learning and parental attitudes” (Elliott 2). Absenteeism in the workplace has been an issue under review for many years: it is a dilemma all organizations face, and yet is not commonly understood. Many facets and variables lie within the timing and reason for each absence incurred by the organization’s employees. In the realm of education, the lack of qualified substitute teachers, coupled with the increasing costs of teacher absenteeism, and more importantly, the effects on student achievement, reveal the seriousness of this growing epidemic.

In reviewing the literature on the topic of teacher absenteeism, it is quickly apparent that scholarly research in this area is limited. Several dissertations study this phenomenon, but books and journal articles are scarce. Unicom stated that teacher absenteeism is a controversial and understudied issue (33). “A lack of research in the area of teacher absenteeism and its causes is a problem itself” (Ehrenberg et al. 73). This chapter reviews the research literature of teacher absenteeism in four main categories: historical aspects of teacher absenteeism, absenteeism in non-educational settings, policies related to teacher absenteeism, and the effectiveness of incentive plans on absenteeism.

Historical Aspects of Teacher Absenteeism

Absenteeism has received much less attention in the educational arena of research literature than have its counterparts—the business and industry fields (Ehrenberg et al.;

Nord; Norton; Winkler; Woods, and Montagno). The Educational Resource Service stated in 1980:

Absenteeism among educational personnel, especially among teachers, who comprise more than half of all school staff and whose presence in the classroom is essential for normal school operations, has not engendered nearly the amount of scholarly and popular inquiry as that found in business and industry (1).

Teachers' jobs are so incredibly important to help prepare students for the high-paced, fast growing world of the twenty-first century that it is imperative they be present in their job positions consistently to provide structure and continuity in the curriculum. With absenteeism rates of teachers at an all-time high, more studies are needed to help determine what affects this trend positively or negatively. Studies have shown "absenteeism is viewed as a national and global problem" (Mowday et al. 76). In addition, absenteeism is a problem that is "chronic in the public sector and private sector of the United States. Employee absenteeism reduces productivity and can be very costly" (Pitkoff, 1993, 3). In 1985, Blankenship noted, "Prior to the 1970s, employee absenteeism was generally examined in relationship to personal factors and/or environmental conditions" (11). With the importance and accountability attached to No Child Left Behind, most studies of teacher absenteeism now focus on how student achievement is affected. In addition, if not based around student achievement, the studies examine causes of absences or teacher characteristics most commonly observed in absences, with efforts to discover how teacher absenteeism can be improved. However, teacher absenteeism remains a trend that continues to leave school districts in search of

answers (Capitan, Costanza, and Klucher). It seems employee absenteeism is a growing problem in need of answers in both education and the business and industry fields.

Teacher absenteeism in schools has not received the research and dedication necessary to make possible changes; it remains a problem for the field of education. Jacobson, Gibson, and Ramming stated, "Employee absenteeism is a twentieth-century social invention that originated because of the conflict between the bureaucratic control in the workplace and the collective voice of workers" (1). Through conflict between management/administration and teachers, teachers' unions were born. An issue teachers' unions addressed was paid sick leave, which has led to higher rates of teacher absenteeism. Teachers view those paid leave days as time owed to them, while also perceiving that it is their right to use those days when and how they want to. The first major research focusing on teacher absenteeism occurred in the 1970s, following the rapid growth of teachers' unions in the 1960s. However, as early as 1928, teacher absences were reported to be 5.28 days per teacher per year (Kuhlman 46). California schools selected for study between 1952 and 1956 showed that the average absenteeism rate for a certificated employee was 4.73 days per year (Stallings 62).

From 1967-74, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the "education" classification had twice the rate of increase for absenteeism as did the "total U.S. industry" classification (Elliott 2). In 1974, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association reported their "teacher absentee rate to be significantly higher than all major industry categories, and double the professional and technical absentee rate of private industry" (39). Also in Pennsylvania, the teacher absenteeism rate skyrocketed by 106% between the 1961-62 and 1977-78 school years: an average of 4.76 days in 1961-62 rose

to 8.2 days in 1977-78 (Pennsylvania School Board Association). It was found in 1975 by the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce that 66% of the school districts they studied were beyond the commonly accepted range in other fields of 2-4% absentee rate (6). From 1971 to 1976, teacher absences in Illinois increased by 16.1%, as indicated in a report to the Illinois Department of Education (37). A 1979 study in Buffalo, New York, found that time off averaged 9.9 days per teacher that year, as compared to an average of 6 days of absenteeism of industrial workers ("What's Missing" 371-372). Manlove and Elliott attributed this increase in absences to the more generous sick leave policies and provisions bargained for by teacher union groups (270).

A doctoral study of two hundred elementary educators in Clark County, Nevada, reported that average absence rates rose from 5.95 days in the three years prior to the implementation of collective bargaining to 8.40 days in the three years following (Bundren). Studies conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s by several researchers found that absences rose with the incorporation of higher leave day provisions in collective bargaining agreements (Redmond; Newport and Paul; Educational Research Service). Collective bargaining influenced teacher absenteeism in a negative manner by allowing teachers the right to take paid sick days.

In 1981, Lewis compared teacher absenteeism to "a disease approaching epidemic proportions ... Teacher absenteeism nationwide annually costs upward of two billion dollars" and that "on any given school day, more than 200,000 school employees don't show up for work" (29). A 10-15% absenteeism rate among teachers was common (Lewis 29). Elliott found "teacher absenteeism is not only continuing but increasing" (2), which was supported by other major studies at the time. As indicated by the U.S. Bureau

of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of National Affairs, as cited by the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (3): “A reasonable level of absence should be about 3% of available work time, but the attainable minimum level may approach 2% or less.” This 3% level was agreed with by Gaudet in 1963 when he stated that the “level of total absences not exceed 3% in order to obtain system effectiveness.” It was found in 1982 that the teacher absentee rates were at least double the attainable minimum (Elliott 2). Bigger reported that the education rates of absences were significantly higher than in the major industry classifications and almost double that of the professional and technological absence rates (17-18).

Hill noted in the Updating School Board Policies Journal in 1982 that over a course of 16 years, the teacher absenteeism rate had increased 5% per year (1-4). A study of teacher absenteeism rates in 1983 found that in the Chicago Public Schools, the rates were 5.8%, equaling an average of 10.4 days of absences per teacher per year (Meara). Comparing teacher absence rates to white-collar and blue-collar non-teaching personnel, Klein conducted a study based on the Current Population Survey (CPS). The data revealed 6.2% of teachers were absent in any given week, compared to 2.6% of white-collar and 4.4% of blue-collar non-teaching personnel. “Within the service-producing industries, education was among the highest on a measure of lost work time” (Klein 26). Data on employee absenteeism rates throughout the United States compiled by the Bureau of National Affairs revealed that the median absence rate for all jobs in 1986 was 1.8%. Nevertheless, for all jobs classified as “non-business,” which includes educational services, it was 2.3%. This trend continued, as the BNA continued to report.

As illustrated in the studies discussed below, teacher absenteeism rates are on the increase. A study of 722 New York state public schools in 1991 (excluding New York City) showed that on average, teachers spent 8.9 days per year on some type of leave (Ehrenberg et al.). This correlates into approximately 5% per year. According to Pasternak, unscheduled employee absenteeism increased 9% during 1993 (2). Brooklyn High School reported in 1993 that almost one fourth of the employees of the school had absenteeism rates double that of the national average (Pitkoff, 1981, 41). A study conducted in Chicago in 1996 reported a range of 4 to 7 days of annual average sick leave days used by teachers (Markowich and Eckberg 116). In 1999, the Staffing Industry Report showed “current teacher absenteeism averages between 8-10%” (1). When calculated, this equals one full year of every child’s education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. A research study conducted in the San Bernardino, California, schools in 1999 reported that annual teacher absenteeism rates ranged from 4.72 to 15.46 days per teacher (Hovey 124-125). Calvert studied a rural school district that revealed average teacher absences to be about 10.96 days per year (2001). Bruno noted in his 2002 research that the average absenteeism rate was 8.27 days per teacher per year (32). These studies all report a higher rate of average absenteeism for teachers when compared to other professions in the business and industry sectors, both private and public.

Absenteeism in Non-Educational Settings

Across the nation, teaching is not the only profession subjected to the quandary of employee absenteeism. This problem plagues many businesses, companies, and corporations, both public and private. Employers are challenged each day with the issues

of employee absenteeism. However, this growing problem is nothing new, as Mayo in 1945 wrote of a “great public concern” (48). Mayo was referring to the absenteeism that plagued the nation and threatened war production output. This problem was so alarming to the nation that public meetings and Congressional hearings were held to address the situation.

One issue facing the business and industry sector is poor record keeping of workplace absenteeism. In the 1970s, five hundred U.S. firms were surveyed, only to find that fewer than 40% kept records of absenteeism. Occurring in the 1970s and less in recent years, Frayne identified measurement as “a major methodological problem in research on absenteeism. Various measures of absenteeism (e.g., total days lost, number of instances of absence, etc.) do not co-vary” (21). A continuous problem for the business and industry sectors is what to measure and from where to collect these aggregated data.

The 1980s provided much research in the area of employee absenteeism in the American workforce. The United States Department of Labor reported the estimated cost of employee absenteeism during the 1980s to be over \$20 billion, and it continued to rise with inflation (Kuzmits 5). Dent reported during this same period that employee absenteeism costs for American companies were over \$30 billion (3).

An economic research study conducted in 1992 found that high-wage and non-union firms experienced fewer days lost due to absenteeism than did firms with more part-time employees or those with an unsatisfactory employee-employer relationship (Chaudhurty and Ng 3). This research supports the notion in both business and education that work or school climate influences employee/teacher absenteeism.

In an article titled “Sick Days Should Be Reexamined,” Morgenstern discussed a survey of 574 companies in 1996 that found only 28% of absenteeism due to personal illness (11). He went on to say, “Implicit in this knowledge is that a large portion of absenteeism is taken for reasons other than sickness that the employee feels is justified and to which he or she is entitled” (Morgenstern 11).

As businesses continued to battle with absenteeism and its counter-productivity to the purpose of work, Frayne pointed out, “As employees’ demands for flexibility, autonomy, and challenge increase, managers are struggling to find an approach that accommodates both the employees’ need for freedom and the organization’s need for control” (7). In dealing with these demands from employees, many businesses, as well as school districts, are trying to cope by revising leave policies.

Two types of leave plans are in existence across the nation: defined benefit leave plans and flexible benefit plans. A defined benefit leave plan is one that includes sick leave, which can only be used when the employee is sick. “The standard defined benefit packages were developed under the assumption that the breadwinner was a male in a single earner household. These policies were developed in the first half of the twentieth century to protect the employee’s role of being the single earner within the family” (J. Glass 41). The second type of benefit plan, the flexible benefit plan, is one in which an employee’s available leave is combined into a single pool of days. In Norman’s 2005 dissertation titled “How Much Leave Do School Employees Utilize?” she provides an example of an employee given eight days of sick leave, two days of personal leave, and ten days of vacation leave per year under a defined benefit plan. This same employee under a flexible benefit plan would have twenty days of Paid Time Off or Paid Days Off

for the year (30). This would allow the employee to decide within the guidelines established by the organization to use these days how and when he/she would prefer. To curtail absences in non-educational settings, many employers have moved away from direct benefit plans and implemented flexible benefit plans with paid time off/paid days off banks; Henry believes “the education sector could possibly benefit from similar programs in an effort to minimize employee use of sick leave time.”

Norman believed that, “Paid Days Off leave programs can control costs and absenteeism” (30). Providing the opportunities and freedom to employees and their families to make decisions regarding absences would seem to increase trust, climate, and morale issues within an organization, which in turn could lead to better attendance and productivity of employees. “Paid Days Off plans provide inducements that discourage employees from drawing on accrued leave at the first sneeze because employees are able to use all of their leave for leisure or personal activities” (Cole 12). Unplanned absenteeism decreases as employees no longer need to lie about being sick to use leave time and can plan for use of leave time. “This allows management to schedule the workload in order for business to continue as usual” (Norman 31). Alexander viewed this issue as an incentive for employees to stay with the company, as he stated, “Giving employees more flexibility and control of their working lives increases the chances of retaining the experience and knowledge you’ve paid to develop; not to mention the likely increases in productivity and loyalty” (74).

Some school districts have implemented flexible leave plans. A study of Missouri school districts found that employees in “Districts with flexible leave plans utilized 6.9 leave days during the 2002-03 school year, and employees in districts with defined leave

plans utilized 8.5 days” (Norman 76). Obviously, some districts are trying to increase teacher attendance by using flexible plans.

Policies Related to Teacher Absenteeism

Competitive benefits packages offered to employees are used to attract and retain quality staff, whether in the educational setting or a different area. In 1996, Kaiser conducted a study showing that, “Because neither employers nor employees incur a large share of the marginal costs of absence, the system simultaneously creates work disincentives for employees” (11). This means that employees are encouraged by the sick leave policies/benefits to take more days off and gives the employers permission to condone this behavior. In order to attract the best teachers, school districts must offer competitive benefits packages. The problem is that school boards do not realize that this benefit may actually increase teacher absenteeism rates. According to Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Reese, and Ehrenberg:

School district policies governing the annual usage of teacher leave days that appear in teacher contracts clearly do influence teachers’ usage of leave days...a larger annual number of leave days permitted, the presence of a “sick leave bank,” and a larger number of days granted are all associated with higher actual teacher usage days (99).

Fusco’s study, conducted in 1983, reported the effects of school district policies, procedures and practices on teacher absenteeism. This study found no significant differences between districts implementing policies and procedures to reduce the teacher absenteeism rates when compared to districts that had not. When revising policies for

reducing absenteeism, Fusco's research recommended the use of pilot programs within school districts before full implementation (361).

Numerous studies exist for both education and the business industry sectors, but the studies "test a general theory or model of teacher absenteeism. If researchers and practitioners know which factors are related to the absenteeism of teachers, then programs can be designed to encourage better attendance" (Scott and Wimbush 502). In agreement with Scott and Wimbush, this researcher believed it would be the same for developing policies around teacher absenteeism and attendance. School districts must investigate the development of policies that encourage attendance and discourage absenteeism. Hill offered seven steps that should be evaluated with each new policy change towards changing teacher absenteeism:

1. Offer incentive for good or perfect attendance.
2. Allow unlimited accumulation of sick leave days.
3. Require investigation of attendance record of job applicants.
4. Make good attendance a requisite for tenure.
5. Add appraisal of attendance to regular staff meetings.
6. Brief substitute teachers (ensure they have lesson plan formats that are appropriate and useful).
7. Reserve the right to request documentation of illness (3).

Another factor to be considered when developing policies for teacher absenteeism and encouraging attendance is the requirement of teachers to contact direct supervisors. In 2004, a study of seven Kansas City metropolitan school districts conducted by Henry

found that districts that required teachers to call their immediate supervisor to report an absence incurred the second lowest amount of leave time within the sample. Bowers reported:

When teachers are expected to contact supervisors prior to their absence, they tend to have lower teacher absenteeism. It would be more difficult to have to explain the reason for the absence to the principal than it would be to an answering machine. This is a method that has been tried and been proven effective. (10)

In addition, school districts in which sick leave banks are utilized experience more absenteeism than districts that do not have such accommodations. Research by Norman, Henry, Cole, Pitkoff 1993, and Drago and Wooden all support the non-use of sick leave banks. Drago and Wooden found that school districts with sick leave banks used 1.1 more days of leave than did districts with employees that did not have access to a sick leave bank (59).

The Effectiveness of Absence Reduction Programs

In 2003, a study of the perceptions of Illinois school superintendents on teacher absence rates and the effectiveness of absence reduction plans stated:

The first choice of school administrators would be to have the permanent teacher available to teach on a daily basis. Absence reduction programs are designed to reduce the disruptions caused by teacher absences with the use of incentives to keep permanent teachers in the classroom (Reardon 2).

The study reported that teacher absenteeism rates are much higher than any other profession, which inferred the possibility that some teacher absences are discretionary. This means that teacher absenteeism rates could be reduced, but school districts must decide if it is a priority to accomplish this. If so, how might it be possible to reduce the rate of teacher absenteeism? Many districts have investigated and implemented policies to address teacher absenteeism through incentive plans based on teacher attendance.

School boards, in fact, may be causing an increase in teacher absenteeism within their own locales by failing to invest the time and energy to research the causes of teacher absenteeism. In other words, the lack of preventive actions by school boards may encourage absenteeism rather than discourage it. These “disincentives created by incentives” (Kaiser 11) often propel further incentives. “Yet, the question still remains as the appropriateness of offering teachers attendance incentives then in first place. Attendance incentives seem incompatible with the notions of increased professionalism” (Jacobson 89).

In the state of New York, two school districts under review in the late 1980s compared the rates of teacher absences directly before an absence reduction plan was implemented and again directly after: the Sugar Hill School District and North Forest School District. In the Sugar Hill School District, teacher absence rates were not viewed as a problem before the implementation of the plan, but money was provided by the state to conduct the research. The Sugar Hill School District experienced a mean of 7.2 days of absences per teacher during the school year immediately preceding the implementation of the plan; the absence reduction plan allowed teachers to draw one share for each absence

less than seven (the mean from the prior year). For a district that did not view teacher absenteeism as an issue before the plan was implemented, some incredible data was collected during the implementation year:

1. Teachers received 1,274 shares at a value of \$57.16 per share.
2. The perfect attendance bonus was given to 108 teachers, which equaled an increase to 34% receiving this bonus, from 8% the previous year.
3. The mean number of days a teacher was absent decreased from 7.2 days to 5.3 days.
4. The district was able to save \$25,000 in personnel costs. (Jacobson 83)

According to Jacobson, the Sugar Hill plan was successful because teachers with the best attendance received the largest rewards, while those with poor attendance got nothing (89).

The second school district in the New York state study was the North Forest School District, where teacher absences had been considered a problem for at least five years prior to the point of the absence reduction plan implementation. The plan “offers teachers an increase of three sick days per year over the present contract if the overall absentee rate was reduced by 25%” (Jacobson 86). This equated to a decrease of approximately three days per teacher in order to reach the goal. This plan said:

Teachers who have consistently maintained good attendance records will be held hostage by those who abuse sick leave. For example, a teacher, who in the past has always had perfect attendance, can do nothing to help reduce the district’s overall rate of absenteeism. Therefore, if high-absence teachers fail to respond to

the incentive, then teachers who have been loyal to the district in terms of dependable service will not be rewarded (Jacobson 86).

According to Jacobson, the North Forest School District absence reduction plan was deemed as ineffective because “offering unitary group rewards that were unattainable primarily through the efforts of those who have abused those rewards the most in the past, misplaced the power of the incentive” (87).

Identifying the problem of teacher absenteeism and creating a four-year plan to address the problem in detail was found to be beneficial for all stakeholders by a school district in Antioch, Illinois, in the late 1980s. This four-year plan had three steps:

1. The district launched an information campaign to inform not only the school district employees, but also the community at large.
2. The district tightened procedures and expectations for teacher absenteeism.
3. The district developed positive incentives for teachers who had missed less than six days per year. (Skidmore 41)

Several positive outcomes developed with the implementation of this four-year plan to reduce teacher absences: teacher absenteeism decreased by 4.26 days per year, the district received positive publicity from these actions, and student achievement scores improved across the district. Skidmore stated, “Our improved absence rates are not a happy coincidence, but rather the result of identifying a problem and taking the necessary steps to bring it under control” (41).

During the 1983-84 school year, a plan titled the “Second Mile Plan” in the Houston Independent School District provided an incentive to the teachers for reducing their absenteeism rates. This incentive plan allowed teachers the opportunity to increase their salaries up to \$6,000 per year. The strategy used resulted in gains not only in the area of reducing teacher absenteeism, but also in increasing student achievement. By the end of the school year, it was found to “have reduced teacher absences from an average of 9.0 days to 5.5 days, and in the elementary grades first through sixth, student achievement had met or exceeded expected grade placement” (Houston Independent School District). During the first four years of the Second Mile Plan, over \$37 million was expended by the school district in stipends to teachers for reducing their absences. The cost effectiveness for this district was accomplished through reduced teacher absenteeism rates and improved student achievement.

Winborne and Stainbeck reported on a salary supplemental program for teachers in King William County Schools in Virginia. Within this voluntary supplemental program, teachers were rewarded based upon criteria, one of which was attendance: excellent performance was the other criterion. Teachers could increase their pay by \$2,000 for excelling in professional growth and performance. One of the main requirements was that “Teachers were to have no absences without pay and have no more than three approved days of absence during the school year” (Winborne and Stainbeck 29). The report indicated that the supplemental plan worked and had a positive effect on teacher absenteeism because of the voluntary nature of the plan and the idea that it was not tied to the regular salary schedule.

Absence reduction plans must be created carefully in order to tackle the real issue of teacher absenteeism. Absence reduction plans have the single primary purpose of reducing absences within the school or organization. Teachers who normally show consistency in being at work and making it a priority to be there are usually the employees rewarded through an absence reduction plan; more than likely, these employees would not have been absent anyway. Therefore, the question remains, do absence reduction plans affect what is to be addressed?

Summary

This review of literature of teacher absenteeism and the many facets of this phenomenon found the problem to be alarmingly disruptive to the purpose and missions of schools across the nation every school day. This review concentrated on four main categories: (a) historical aspects of teacher absenteeism, (b) absenteeism in the non-educational setting, (c) policies related to teacher absenteeism, and (d) the effectiveness of incentive plans in reducing absenteeism.

The historical aspects of teacher absenteeism indicated that this issue is one schools and administrators have constantly faced for many years. It came to greater visibility in the second half of the twentieth century due to the establishment of collective bargaining and the formation of teacher unions. This phenomenon has plagued schools for many years.

Absenteeism in the non-educational setting was the focus of the second section. Workplace employee absenteeism affects the business and industry sector of our nation, just as it does the education profession. The main difference is the cost factor: businesses

need to pay only the salary of the person absent for paid time off or sick leave, but in school districts, the cost is doubled due to the cost of a substitute teacher. Research within the non-educational setting noted the feelings of employees: they consider paid leave to be an entitlement of the job and that they may use it whenever they wish. This section also discussed two types of leave plans—defined plans and flexible plans—and explained how the plans differed in employee rates of absenteeism.

The researcher studied policies related to teacher absenteeism. The research showed that school districts that offer sick leave benefits incur larger costs due to teacher absenteeism. It was noted that this incentive gives teachers the right to use the days and gives the administrators the right to condone the behavior. Research conducted indicated that if the causes of the absenteeism were known, then policies and plans could be put into place to resolve this problem.

School districts across the nation faced this problem and many tried to combat it through absence reduction plans. Several school districts' experiences were noted, and the results reported depended upon the type of plan adopted. Most did not succeed in reducing teacher absence rates over the course of more than one to three years. Several studies recommended that pilot programs be implemented in districts and building administrators be highly involved in the process.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy improved full-time, certificated teacher attendance in the North Kansas City School District. This study compared full-time, certificated teacher absences during the 2006-07 school year, when the new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented, to the 2005-06 school year, when the former sick/personal leave policy was in effect. This chapter describes the research design, hypotheses, population, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis instrumentation used in this study.

Research Design

A causal-comparative research method was used to conduct the study on certificated teachers' absenteeism rates. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg in Applying Educational Research: A Practical Guide, causal-comparative research is defined as “a type of quantitative investigation that seeks to discover possible causes and effects of a personal characteristic or behavior pattern by comparing individuals in whom it is present with individuals in whom it is absent or present to a lesser degree” (545). This study was intended to produce one-year baseline statistical data about teacher absenteeism in the North Kansas City School District after the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy.

The causal-comparative research method was chosen because it allowed a comparison of what occurred before the new policy took effect to what occurred after the

new policy was put into place. The new annual discretionary leave policy implementation was the independent variable and teacher absenteeism was the dependent variable.

Hypotheses

The review of literature provided research to support that teacher absenteeism was a growing concern in our nation's schools. The following non-directional, two-tailed research hypotheses were tested.

H₁: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

H₂: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

H₃: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected teacher absenteeism rates of elementary, middle, or high school full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

Population and Demographics

The population studied included all full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District. In the certificated category, for the 2005-06 school year the district employed 653 elementary teachers (pre-k through fifth grade), 321 middle school

teachers (sixth through eighth grades), and 346 high school teachers (ninth through twelfth grades) for a total of 1,320 teachers. For the 2006-07 school year, the district employed 617 elementary teachers, 325 middle school teachers, and 325 high school teachers for a total of 1,267 teachers.

Data Collection Procedures

Teacher absenteeism data for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years was collected through the SmartFind Express Employee Management System. The North Kansas City School District's Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services gave consent for access to the system. With this consent, the researcher received user rights (login code and password) to access the system and review all attendance records of certificated teachers in the school district. The SmartFind Express Employee Management System allowed the approved user to query reports for various groups of employees, identifying them by school and employee identification number to protect the confidentiality of district employees.

Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

In order to generate reports for the 2005-06 school year, the researcher queried reports within the system for the following categories: sick leave, family leave, emergency leave, and personal leave. All the data retrieved from the four categories were summed to find the total number of discretionary absences in 2005-06 for each full-time certificated teacher. This allowed easier comparisons of the data between the two years. In order to analyze data between the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years, the researcher

generated reports for absences of the educational levels below. These reports aided the researcher in determining the difference in the absenteeism rates of certificated employees both as a group and at each grade level (elementary, middle, and high school).

1. Total full-time, certificated teachers pre-k through twelfth grade,
2. Total full-time, certificated teachers at the elementary school level (pre-k through fifth grade),
3. Total full-time, certificated teachers at the middle school level (sixth through eighth grade), and
4. Total full-time, certificated teachers at the high school level (ninth through twelfth grade).

To determine whether the new annual discretionary leave policy affected Monday and Friday absences between 2005-06 and 2006-07, the researcher programmed the SmartFind Express Employee Management System to run absenteeism reports for all Monday and Friday dates for both school years (2005-06 and 2006-07). The researcher analyzed the data in relation to the Monday and Friday absenteeism rates of all full-time, certificated teachers for the two school years in order to make comparisons.

Tables were used to present comparative quantitative data collected for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years relating to certificated teacher absenteeism. A *t* test for independent variables was performed for the purposes of determining if there was improvement in teacher absenteeism because of the new annual discretionary leave policy. According to Salkind, a *t* test for independent means is used if you are “interested in finding out if there is a difference on the average scores of one (or more) variable(s) between the two groups that were independent of one another” (161). For this research

study, the independent groups were (a) the absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers for the 2005-06 school year and (b) the absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers for the 2006-07 school year.

In analyzing all data, absences for bereavement, school business, military, and jury duty were not included. Absences related to personal or family illness, emergency, or personal reasons were tabulated for purposes of determining whether the new annual discretionary leave policy affected the absenteeism rate of full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District.

Computation of the test statistic was completed using SPSS Student Version 15.0 software. The determined value is commonly referred to as the *obtained value*. To determine if the obtained value represents a confirmation of the stated hypotheses, the value was compared to what is termed the *critical values*. Critical values are found in the book Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics by Neil J. Salkind in a table on pages 358-59. Salkind stated in his book that “We can use this distribution to see if two independent means differ from one another by comparing what we would expect by chance (the tabled or critical value) to what we observe (the obtained value)” (166). The degrees of freedom approximates the sample size. The formula for the degrees of freedom is $n_1 - 1 + n_2 - 1$, with n equaling the number of participants in each group. This study requires n to equal 1,320 for 2005-06 group and 1,267 for 2006-07 group. Once the critical value was determined from the table, a comparison was made to accept or reject the hypothesis. If the obtained value is larger than the critical value, then the researcher must accept the hypothesis as stated: this means there is a difference and something other than chance is occurring. However, if the obtained value is less than the critical value, the

researcher must reject the hypothesis as stated, meaning it is not extreme enough to indicate that the difference is anything other than chance.

When accepting the hypothesis (an obtained value larger than the critical value), it was important to determine the level of impact of the new annual discretionary leave policy on curbing teacher absenteeism. Salkind stated, “The most direct and simple way to compute effect size is to simply divide the difference between the means by any one of the standard deviations” (169). To explain the meaning of these numbers once computed, Salkind reported that:

1. A small effect size ranges from 0.0 to .20.
2. A medium effect size ranges from .20 to .50.
3. A large effect size ranges from .50 and above. (169)

Summary

This causal-comparative study used teacher absenteeism rate data from the school years discussed to make comparisons of absenteeism rates of all full-time, certificated teachers in the school district, as well as differences in absenteeism rates of elementary, middle, and high school level teachers. The study also focused on determining if differences existed in Monday and Friday absenteeism prior to and following the implementation of the new annual discretionary leave policy. This chapter discussed the methods of the study by describing the research design, the hypotheses, the population and demographics, the data collection procedures, and the data collection and statistical analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if the implementation of a new leave policy improved certificated teacher attendance in the North Kansas City School District. This study examined full-time, certificated teacher absences for the 2006-07 school year, when a new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented, compared to the 2005-06 school year with the former sick/personal leave policy. One area of focus was on Monday and Friday absences, where data showed an increased need for substitute teachers. In addition, the difference in absences between the elementary, middle, and high school level were reviewed. This chapter reports the results from the quantitative analyses used to address each of the research hypotheses. The findings are organized and presented accordingly, with each research hypothesis in its own section along with the statistics tables to report the findings.

Data for this study was collected from the 2006-07 school year and compared to data from the 2005-06 school year. Attendance data for all full time, certificated teachers was collected using computerized district attendance reports through the SmartFind Express Employee Management System. A *t* test for independent variables analyzed the data. This type of test provided the opportunity to observe any changes in the absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers before the implementation of the policy, as compared to after the implementation of the new annual discretionary leave

policy between these two school years (a pre-test/post-test scenario). Comparisons were made by analyzing absenteeism data of:

1. Full-time, certificated teachers Mondays through Fridays during the 2005-06 school year and the 2006-07 school year,
2. Full-time, certificated teachers on Mondays and Fridays between the two school years, and
3. Full-time, certificated teachers within elementary, middle, and high school levels for the school years of 2005-06 and 2006-07.

Results

The following non-directional, two-tailed research hypotheses were tested for this study.

H₁: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

The data analysis indicated that the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy had an effect on the absenteeism rate of full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District. The total number of full-time, certificated teachers during the 2005-06 school year was 1,320. The mean number of Monday through Friday total absences was 5.2189, while the standard deviation was 5.13308. During the 2006-07 school year, the district had 1,267 total full-time, certificated teachers, with a mean number of total absences of 6.6259. The standard deviation for the year 2006-07 was 4.95195.

To analyze the data and determine whether there was a difference in teacher absenteeism after the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy, *t* tests for independent means were applied using the SPSS Student Version 15.0 software.

Table 4

Absenteeism Rates for Monday through Friday 2005-06 and 2006-07

School Year	Full Time Certificated Teachers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value
2005-06	1320	5.2189	5.13308	-7.0913
2006-07	1267	6.6259	4.95195	

Source: North Kansas City School District, SmartFind Express Employee Management System, 2006. SPSS Student Version 15.0, SPSS, Inc. 2006

The calculated *t*-value was -7.0913. According to Salkind, the sign is not considered in the calculation because the placement of the mean of any one variable in the formula is not determined in a two-tailed, non-directional hypothesis (165). The negative sign on the significant *t* value ($t(a) = -7.09$, $p > 0.05$) indicates the new discretionary leave policy did not curb teacher absenteeism, but rather may have contributed to an increase in absenteeism. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 5. The value was determined to be significant at 0.00.

The critical value represents the value at which chance is the most attractive explanation for any of the observed differences between the two groups. If the obtained value is more extreme than the critical value, the hypothesis is accepted. When determining the critical value for a *t* test, the number of degrees of freedom must be taken into consideration. Roughly stated, degrees of freedom correspond to the number of

values that may vary after certain restrictions have been imposed on all values. The degrees of freedom for a t test of independent means are determined by the formula $(n_1 + n_2 - 1)$. Due to the large sample size of this study, the degrees of freedom for all determinations of the critical t value will be set at infinity (∞).

The second hypothesis tested in this study related to Monday and Friday absenteeism of teachers.

H₂: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

According to the data collected during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years, the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absences incurred by full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District.

Table 5 exemplifies the data collected for this research hypothesis for Monday and Friday absences for the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years. Again, the number of full-time, certificated teachers for 2005-06 was 1,320, while the mean for the Monday and Friday absences was 2.3409, with a standard deviation of 2.44772. For 2006-07, the number of full-time, certificated teachers was 1,267. The Monday and Friday absenteeism rate mean was 2.7901 and the standard deviation was 2.20443.

Table 5

Monday and Friday Absenteeism Rates for 2005-06 and 2006-07

School Year	Full Time Certificated Teachers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value
2005-06	1320	2.3409	2.44772	-4.8985
2006-07	1267	2.7901	2.20443	

Source: North Kansas City School District, SmartFind Express Employee Management System, 2006. SPSS Student Version 15.0, SPSS, Inc. 2006.

To test the second research hypothesis, a *t* test for independent means was conducted. The calculated *t* value was -4.8985 and was determined to be significant at 0.00. The obtained value of -4.8985 was compared to the critical value of 1.96. Since the obtained value (disregard the sign) was larger than the critical value, a significant difference between the groups was determined ($t(a) = -4.8985, p > 0.05$). Once again, the negative sign indicates that the new discretionary leave policy appears to have contributed to higher rates of absenteeism in 2006-07 than in the previous year.

The final hypothesis tested for this study related to absenteeism of elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers.

H₃: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected teacher absenteeism rates of elementary, middle, or high school full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

The statistical analysis of the data demonstrated that there was a difference on full-time, certificated teachers among the three levels of elementary, middle, and high school in the North Kansas City School District. To complete the analysis of the data for

this research hypothesis, a t test for independent variables was performed for the elementary group, middle school group, and the high school group. No calculations were performed to determine whether differences existed between elementary to middle or elementary to high school or middle school to high school. Similar to the first two hypotheses, the critical value was 1.96.

Table 6 illustrates the absenteeism rates of the elementary group of full-time, certificated teachers. The district employed 653 full-time elementary certificated teachers in 2005-06 with a mean absenteeism rate of 5.6309. The standard deviation of this group was 5.02479. During 2006-07, the elementary group totaled 617 full-time, certificated teachers. The mean of this group's absenteeism rate was 6.7634, with a standard deviation of 4.94933.

This data indicates there was a difference on the full-time, certificated teachers in the elementary group, as the obtained value for the t test for independent means was -4.044. The obtained t value of -4.044 is greater (disregard the sign) than the critical value of 1.96; thus, differences in absenteeism exist between the two years of data. Similar to what was seen in earlier computations, the negative t value indicates the new discretionary leave policy appears to have contributed to greater absenteeism in the 2006-07 school year ($t(a) = -4.044, p > 0.05$).

Table 6

Elementary Full-Time, Certificated Teachers Absenteeism Rates for 2005-06 and 2006-07

School Year	Full Time Certificated Elementary Teachers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value
2005-06	653	5.6309	5.02479	-4.044
2006-07	617	6.7634	4.94933	

Source: North Kansas City School District, SmartFind Express Employee Management System, 2006. SPSS Student Version 15.0, SPSS, Inc. 2006.

The middle school full-time certificated teachers group was analyzed to determine if there was a significant difference in these teachers' absenteeism behaviors after a new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented in 2006-07. Table 7 illustrates the data pertaining to this group. After performing the calculations of the *t* test for independent means, the obtained value for the middle school group was -3.363. The obtained *t* value of -3.363 is greater (disregard the sign) than the critical value of 1.96, thus differences exist between the two years of data. Similar to what was seen in earlier computations, the negative *t* value indicates the new discretionary leave policy appears to have contributed to greater absenteeism in the 2006-07 school year ($t(a) = -3.363, p > 0.05$).

Table 7

Middle School Full-Time, Certificated Teachers Absenteeism Rates for 2005-06 and 2006-07

School Year	Full Time Certificated Middle School Teachers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value
2005-06	321	5.2087	5.61889	-3.363
2006-07	325	6.6246	5.07177	

Source: North Kansas City School District, SmartFind Express Employee Management System, 2006. SPSS Student Version 15.0, SPSS, Inc. 2006

Table 8

High School Full-Time, Certificated Teachers Absenteeism Rates for 2005-06 and 2006-07

School Year	Full Time Certificated High School Teachers	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value
2005-06	346	4.4509	4.77726	-5.158
2006-07	325	6.3662	4.83921	

Source: North Kansas City School District, SmartFind Express Employee Management System, 2006. SPSS Student Version 15.0, SPSS, Inc. 2006.

The third group, high school teachers, also showed a difference between 2005-06 and 2006-07 (see Table 8). With 671 high school teachers for the two school years studied, the degrees of freedom for this *t* test of independent means remained at infinity. The obtained value of -5.158 was compared to the critical value of 1.96. Since the

obtained value (disregard the sign) was greater than the critical value, a significant difference between the groups was determined ($t(a) = -5.158$). Once again, the negative sign indicates that the new discretionary leave policy appears to have contributed to higher rates of absenteeism in 2006-07 than in the previous year.

Summary of Results

Chapter Four discussed the results of a large, suburban school district study on teacher absenteeism after implementation of a new discretionary leave policy. The findings from the first hypothesis indicated there was a difference in the full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates in the school district between 2005-06 and 2006-07. Results from the second hypothesis revealed there was a difference in teacher absenteeism for Mondays and Fridays only, and findings from the third hypothesis indicated there was a difference in teacher absenteeism among elementary, middle, and high school teachers between the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years. The calculated t values for all three hypotheses were negative. According to Salkind, the sign is not considered in the calculation because the placement of the mean of any one variable in the formula is not determined in a two-tailed, non-directional hypothesis (165). It appears the new discretionary leave policy contributed to an increase in absenteeism from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

In the final chapter, explanations of the findings are discussed. Additionally, implications of the findings and recommendations for future research are presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates in a large Missouri suburban school district. Before July 1, 2006, this district operated on a common sick leave bank of ten sick days plus two personal business days per teacher per year. On July 1, 2006, the district implemented a new annual discretionary leave policy in an attempt to reduce teacher absenteeism by allowing teachers the freedom and flexibility to decide when and why to use paid absences without having to claim illness as the reason. This researcher was interested in determining if there was a decrease in the full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates in the North Kansas City School District. A quantitative causal-comparative study was designed to look at the differences in absenteeism of teachers prior to 2005-06 and following the implementation of a new discretionary leave policy, 2006-07. All comparisons made in this study used a *t* test for independent means.

Discussion of Results

Review of the related literature on teacher absenteeism shows it is a growing problem (Elliott 2; Pitkoff, 1981, 41). Porwell reported that the mean teacher absence rate is eight days per year (5), and other researchers indicated that this is a higher rate of absenteeism than found in other professions (R. Glass; Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce 6; Olson 89; Trejos 32). Lewis suggested that it is not uncommon to see a 10-15% absenteeism rate of teachers (29). The North Kansas City School District should be commended for its mean teacher absenteeism rate falling below the eight days per year

reported by Porwell. The North Kansas City School District's mean range for the two school years, in comparison, was 5.2 to 6.6 days.

The overall finding of the study showed the implementation of the new discretionary leave policy affected absences between full-time, certificated teachers in 2005-06 and full-time, certificated teachers in 2006-07. Even though the hypotheses were written to show a difference, the anticipation was that the new discretionary leave policy would have a positive effect. The outcome suggests the policy may have contributed to a rise in absenteeism.

The new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented as a strategy to assist in curbing absenteeism in the school district. The new policy's objectives were to:

1. Recognize employee's contributions by empowering them to be responsible for their attendance,
2. Decrease the categories and complexity of the current system,
3. Provide incentives and recognition to employees for being on the job to meet student needs,
4. Provide employees with increased flexibility, compensation and leave benefits,
5. Improve communication between employees and supervisors regarding meeting the students' needs, and
6. Provide for incentives for employees to be at work serving the students and reduce the Monday and Friday demand for substitutes.

This quantitative causal-comparative study involved data associated with 1,320 full-time, certificated teachers in 2005-06 and 1,267 full-time, certificated teachers in 2006-07 in the North Kansas City School District. The school district is composed of thirty educational sites: one early childhood education site, twenty elementary sites, five middle school sites, three high school sites, and one alternative education site. Absentee data was obtained through the district's SmartFind Express Employee Management System.

This study addressed three research hypotheses. A *t* test for independent samples was used to examine the differences between teacher absenteeism rates of 2005-06 and 2006-07. The research hypotheses and findings are summarized below:

H₁: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected full-time, certificated teacher absenteeism rates as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

The data indicated the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the absenteeism rate of full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District. The difference, however, was a negative effect. Absences in 2006-07 were higher than absences recorded for 2005-06. This negative effect may be attributed to several factors.

Many businesses and school districts have sought an "approach that accommodates both the employees' need for freedom and the organization's need for control" (Frayne 7). In trying to meet the needs of both employee and employer, a flexible benefit plan was implemented that allowed the employee to decide, within the guidelines established, to use these days how and when he/she would prefer without

having to lie about illness. Cole argued, “Paid Days Off plans provide inducements that discourage employees from drawing on accrued leave at the first sneeze because employees are able to use all of their leave for leisure or personal activities” (12). The North Kansas City School District tried to curtail teacher absenteeism through the new discretionary leave policy, based on guidelines that are more flexible and empowering for teachers. In 2005, Norman studied Missouri school districts with flexible leave plans and found that those districts utilized a mean difference of 1.6 days fewer than districts that used defined leave plans (76).

The North Kansas City School District implemented an incentive for employees’ perfect attendance. For each semester an employee had zero absences, he/she would earn one extra day towards his/her annual discretionary leave bank. These days could be cashed in at the rate of \$90 per day at the end of the school year (for a possible total of \$180 per year). In the review of literature, it was noted that districts that implemented attendance incentives based on the individual were more successful in reducing absences than those plans involving all teachers as a group. The Sugar Hill Plan in New York, the Second Mile Plan in Houston Independent School District, and the King William County Schools plan in Virginia all were successful in decreasing teacher absenteeism rates, because decisions were left in the hands of the teachers as individuals to determine if reducing their absences appealed to them.

The Sugar Hill Plan offered to draw one share (\$57.16) for each absence less than seven (for a possible total of \$400.12 per year). The Second Mile Plan offered teachers the opportunity to raise their salaries by \$6,000 per year if the teachers reduced their absenteeism rates. The King William County Schools plan provided teachers the

opportunity to increase their pay by \$2,000 by having zero absences without pay and no more than three approved days of absence for the school year. One of the differences in each of these plans, compared to the North Kansas City School District plan, was the amount of money offered to teachers for absence reduction. The earlier plans all used higher amounts of money as incentives for the teachers; however, the North Kansas City School District paid only \$180 (at most) per year for perfect attendance. It is likely the teachers in the North Kansas City School District did not find \$180 per year a significant incentive for perfect attendance.

H₂: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

According to the data collected during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years, the implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected the Monday and Friday absences incurred by full-time, certificated teachers in the North Kansas City School District. The effect was unexpected and was negative. The absences for Mondays and Fridays in 2006-07 increased, compared to similar absences in 2005-06. This negative effect may be attributed to the new policy's different requirements for reporting absences on Mondays and Fridays. Teachers who were going to be absent on Mondays or Fridays had to call the building principal directly. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, teachers were not required to call the building principal. A study of seven Kansas City metropolitan school districts reported that districts that required teachers to

call their immediate supervisors to report absences accrued the second lowest amount of leave time within the sample (Henry 32).

Another possible reason for the increase in absences with the implementation of the new policy could be that teachers were given much more flexibility in their decision-making on how to use the given absences for the school year, which resulted in teachers planning for use of the days. If the study could have been conducted longitudinally, it might have resulted in the Hawthorne Effect, wherein the teachers tested their new freedom and flexibility at first, but might reduce the use of these days as they become more familiar with the new policy. Mendham stated, “The Hawthorne Effect is an unwanted effect that can skew the outcome of efficiency” (1).

H₃: The implementation of a new annual discretionary leave policy affected teacher absenteeism rates of elementary, middle, or high school full-time, certificated teachers as determined by attendance reports from the SmartFind Express Employee Management System at the .05 level of significance.

The analysis of the data indicated that the new annual discretionary leave policy affected full-time, certificated teachers among the three levels of elementary, middle, and high school within the North Kansas City School District. The effect was a negative impact. Teacher absences at each of the elementary, middle, and high school levels rose during the 2006-07 school year, as compared to the former sick leave policy of the 2005-06 year. This hypothesis, as it was all-inclusive of the first two hypotheses, would exhibit the same range of possible reasons for the increase in teacher absenteeism across the district (i.e., flexible leave plans versus defined leave plans, incentive plans, freedom and flexibility for employees, etc.).

In summary, the implementation of the North Kansas City School District's new annual discretionary leave policy had a negative effect on the absenteeism rate of full-time, certificated teachers: Monday through Friday, Monday and Friday, and among elementary teachers, middle school teachers, or high school teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the implementation of a new discretionary leave policy would make a difference in the absenteeism of full-time, certificated teachers. In this study, the new policy implementation did not improve teacher absenteeism. Teacher absences increased from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

Implications for Practice

The review of existing literature indicated that utilizing a system where teachers must call their direct supervisors for absences helps to reduce teacher absenteeism rates. In this study during the implementation year of the new annual discretionary leave policy, teachers were asked to call their direct supervisors to report absences only on Mondays and Fridays. This requirement was written into the policy because of the high rates of teacher absences on those two days. One recommendation would be to have teachers call their direct supervisors to report an absence Monday through Friday.

North Kansas City School District offers a sick leave bank to its employees. The bank of days is open to all employees of the district, which includes full-time, certificated teachers. In order for teachers to access the sick leave bank, an application must be completed, and physician documentation is required as proof of the need for more approved paid leave days. For a teacher to apply for sick leave banked days, his/her approved paid leave days must be exhausted. Providing teachers the opportunity to utilize

a sick leave bank has been shown through research to have a negative effect on absenteeism rates. Teachers instead use the days provided to them for frivolous reasons, knowing that they have a bank of leave time to depend on if something should occur. Removing this benefit from employee benefit plans would help to decrease absenteeism rates, as teachers would have to guard their paid time off more closely.

Several absence reduction plans discussed in Chapter Two offered monetary incentives to teachers who attained perfect attendance for the school year. The Houston Independent School District implemented a plan titled “Second Mile Plan” which provided an incentive to teachers for reducing the absences. Teachers could increase their salaries up to \$6,000 per year by reducing their absences. Teacher absences were reduced from an average of 9.0 days to 5.5 days per year (Houston Independent School District). The monetary rewards must be significant enough for teachers to strive for this goal; otherwise, a reduction in absenteeism will not occur. The rewards went to those who were already performing according to rules before the plan was put into place.

It might benefit school districts to consider a tiered plan of absence reduction incentives. For example, those with perfect attendance for the school year would receive a pre-determined amount of monetary award, while those who keep their absenteeism rate below a certain district-determined percentage would receive a lesser monetary amount. The Sugar Hill Plan was implemented in New York to curtail teacher absences. This absence reduction plan allowed teachers to draw one share equaling \$57.16 for each absence less than seven (the mean number of absences from the prior year). A teacher acquiring perfect attendance that school year would have collected \$400.12, whereas a

teacher who was absent for three days during that school year would have collected \$228.64.

Chapter Two noted mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of absence reduction plans. Administrators must routinely monitor teacher absences in their own school districts. Reardon stated, “Any attempt to reduce or manage teacher absences requires comprehensive understanding of the specific nature of the absences, rate of absences, and the reason for absences” (97). Research indicated that teacher absenteeism rates are higher than is found in other professions and that the rates of teacher absenteeism are increasing. A study by Bigger found that absence rates in education were significantly higher than in the major industry classifications, and almost double the professional and technological absence rates (17-18).

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this research study add to the body of research concerning the absenteeism rates of certificated employees in the North Kansas City School District. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are provided for further research:

This study should be conducted on a longitudinal basis to determine if the annual discretionary leave plan with attendance incentives has a positive effect on the absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers over time. In addition, a longitudinal study with a survey of teachers to discover teacher perceptions regarding incentive plans should be conducted to collect data for appropriateness and effectiveness of incentive plans.

A meta-analysis should be conducted to gather additional data on a variety of absentee policies, practices, and procedures. According to Rudestam and Newton, meta-analysis is a study of preexisting data that aims to summarize and compare results from different studies on the same topic (56). As a result, researchers can collect additional data on policies related to absenteeism to see if features or specific components of such policies work.

A study of which variables affect teacher absenteeism needs to be conducted on a system of flexible leave policies and plans, rather than on a system of defined leave policies and plans. Teachers must be present in their classrooms in order to teach their students: it does not matter how well trained they are, the amount of high quality job-embedded professional development they participate in, or the manner in which they are evaluated, if they are not present to teach.

Further research should be considered on the effects of teacher absenteeism rates on levels of student achievement. Teacher absenteeism is one of the problems that may have the greatest effect on education and student achievement. It affects the continuity of instruction, student orientation, curriculum, and classroom routines, which have all been studied, yielding results that show a negative impact from the replacement of a regular teacher (Rundall 5; Malick 1; Smith 127).

Further study of the financial and organizational costs associated with teacher absenteeism should be considered.

Conclusion

This study focused on a large suburban school district in the Kansas City metropolitan area that implemented a new annual discretionary leave policy. The causal-comparative study analyzed the absenteeism rates of full-time, certificated teachers within this district for the school years 2005-06 and 2006-07. A t test for independent variables was the statistical calculation used to examine the hypotheses. The study found there was a difference in teacher absenteeism when the new annual discretionary leave policy was implemented for Monday through Friday absences, for Monday and Friday absences, and on the rates of absenteeism among elementary teachers, middle school teachers, or high school teachers. The calculated t values were negative in all three cases, which indicated that the new discretionary leave policy had a negative effect on absenteeism. This supports the conclusion that the new discretionary leave policy in the North Kansas City School District contributed to, rather than curbed, teacher absenteeism.

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APPENDIX A:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER OF APPROVAL

18 November 2006

Suzanne Boyer-Baker
132 NE Gaslight Lane
Blue Springs, MO
64014



1858
BAKER
UNIVERSITY

Dear Ms. Boyer-Baker:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application (M0018-1006-1024-G) and approved this project under Exempt Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Baker University IRB requires that your consent form must include the date of approval and expiration date (one year from today). Please be aware of the following:

1. At designated intervals (usually annually) until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the IRB.
2. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify the OIR about any new investigators not named in original application.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the IRB Chair or representative immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform Office of Institutional Research (OIR) or myself when this project is terminated. As noted above, you must also provide OIR with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from the IRB one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Marc L. Carter, PhD
Chair, Baker University IRB

CC: Susan Rogers, PhD, Faculty Sponsor

APPENDIX B
APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY



David Stewart, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent
Administrative Services

June 12, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

The North Kansas City School District grants Suzanne Boyer-Baker permission to conduct a research study during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years. The study to be conducted on teacher absenteeism and the implementation of a new district annual discretionary leave policy will help support the district and the Collaborative Teachers Team Negotiations (CTTN) in the decision-making process of this change.

In speaking with Mrs. Boyer-Baker, I understand the scope of her research and how she will collect and present her data. All information to be gathered will be completed in a confidential and appropriate manner. At no time will Mrs. Boyer-Baker's research be used in a way that would have potential risk to subjects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Stewart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. David Stewart
Associate Superintendent
Administrative Services

APPENDIX C

POLICY GCBDA REVISED 2003

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PROFESSIONAL STAFF SHORT-TERM LEAVES AND ABSENCES

Consistent contact with students and staff is important to the learning environment and district operation and therefore is an essential duty of a professional staff member's position. When a professional staff member is routinely tardy, frequently absent or is absent for an extended period of time, the learning environment and district operations deteriorate and the students suffer.

Professional staff employees may be terminated for excessive absences or tardiness. Unless authorized by the Board or the superintendent or otherwise authorized by law, an employee's absence or tardiness is considered excessive if it:

- ▶ Is for a reason not granted as paid or protected leave under Board policy.
- ▶ Exceeds the number of days allotted by the Board for that particular leave.

Even if the absence or tardiness is authorized by the Board or the superintendent, if the absence or tardiness occurs for a reason not granted as paid leave under Board policy or if it exceeds the number of days the employee has been granted under a designated leave, the employee's salary will be docked.

No employee will be disciplined or terminated for absences qualifying for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other applicable law.

The district may require an employee to present a certification of fitness to return to work whenever the employee is absent from work due to the employee's health.

Newly hired employees must have worked one (1) day to qualify for leave. The following leaves with pay will be accorded full-time professional staff employees:

1. **Annual Leave** -- Professional staff employees whose assignments call for 12 months of full-time employment will be entitled to 13 days of annual leave. Professional staff employees whose assignments call for full-time employment only during the regular school term will be entitled to ten (10) days of annual leave. Unused annual leave will be cumulative to the following number of days according to period of yearly employment. Employees serving nine (9) months per year shall be entitled to ten (10) days per year and shall accumulate to 190 days; employees serving ten (10) months shall be entitled to 11 days per year and shall accumulate to 210 days; employees serving 11 months shall be entitled to 12 days per year and shall accumulate to 225 days; and employees serving 12 months per year shall be entitled to 13 days per year and shall accumulate to 249 days of

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Critical

annual leave. The maximum number of days allowed per year shall not exceed the annual rate of accumulation for the respective contract period.

Absences may be charged against annual leave for the following reasons:

- a. Illness, hospitalization related to childbirth, temporary disability or permanent disability of the employee. The Board reserves the right to require a physician's certification attesting to the illness or disability of the claimant and/or inclusive dates of the employee's incapacitation if the absence is for more than ten (10) consecutive days. FMLA health certification procedures apply to FMLA-qualifying absences, even if such absences are paid sick leave. The district requires the use of accumulated leave, if available, during an FMLA period. The district need not wait ten (10) days before requesting an FMLA Certification of Health Care Provider form in conjunction with a preliminary designation that FMLA applies to an absence.
- b. Illness or injury to, or hospitalization related to childbirth of a member of the immediate family. The Board defines "immediate family" to include spouse, parents, children, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, brothers, sisters, foster children and foster parents of an employee or employee's spouse. (Note: "Family" for FMLA purposes is more limited.) Leave with pay for such reasons shall not exceed ten (10) days per year. However, this may be extended upon prior approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services. Upon approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services, this leave may be extended to such persons who have, until the date of illness or injury, resided regularly with and as a member of the household of the employee requesting leave. Approval should be requested in advance, except in cases of emergency.
- c. A maximum of two (2) days of personal leave will be available per school year. Personal leave days will be subtracted from the employee's available annual leave days and are noncumulative. Unused personal leave days may at the option of the employee be compensated at the regular daily rate of a substitute teacher. Such election to receive payment must be requested through the human resources office by the published date. Uncompensated or unused personal leave days will remain in the individual's accumulated annual leave.

Absences may be charged against personal leave for the following reasons:

- 1) Tax investigation.

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- 2) Court subpoena. If the subpoena is directly related to his or her school duties, the employee will be released for court appearance without loss of personal leave. Other court appearances will be deducted from personal leave. The total number of days of such absence per year with no reduction in pay shall not exceed ten (10) days. In the event that such leave should require more than ten (10) days, the number of days allowed shall be reviewed by the Board.
- 3) Wedding or graduation for a member of the immediate family. The Board defines "immediate family" to include spouse, parents, children, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, foster children or foster parents of an employee or employee's spouse.
- 4) In the event of death in a certificated employee's immediate family, the certificated employee may be absent with pay for up to six (6) days per death per school year for the purpose of attending the funeral or making necessary family arrangements. For the purposes of this paragraph, the immediate family is defined as parent, brother, sister, spouse, child, grandparent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandmother-in-law, grandfather-in-law, grandchild, foster child, foster parent, aunt, uncle, niece and nephew. Upon approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services, this leave may be extended to such persons who have, until the date of death, resided regularly with and as a member of the household of the employee requesting leave. Approval should be requested in advance, except in cases of emergency. The Board of Education may require proof of death and relationship prior to payment of such leave.
- 5) Observance of a religious holiday that is normally observed by persons of the employee's faith.
- 6) Conducting personal business of such a nature that it cannot be performed on a Saturday, Sunday or before or after school hours, including parent-teacher conferences.
- 7) Leave under the FMLA.
- 8) Other situations as approved by the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services.

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Critical

A district employee shall not be entitled to use annual leave days during the period the employee receives Workers' Compensation for time lost to work-related incidents.

Any certificated employee who is a member of a retirement system shall remain a member during any period of leave under sick leave provisions of the district or under Workers' Compensation. The employee shall also receive creditable service credit for such leave time if the employee makes contributions to the system equal to the amount of contributions that he or she would have made had he or she been on active service status.

Upon termination of employment with the North Kansas City School District after 15 years of service (as defined in Board policy), a certificated employee shall be paid an amount equal to \$30 times the total unused days of accumulated leave provided such payment does not exceed \$5,700.

Leave will not be granted for an employee due to adverse weather conditions.

Leave will not be granted for an employee to participate in activities in violation of Board policy or law.

Leave requests shall be submitted in writing on a district form at least five (5) days in advance and must be approved by the human resources office in advance. The specific reason for personal leave need not be stated except for leave on the last duty day before or the first duty after a holiday, break or vacation period recognized in the school calendar, or in cases where an emergency is involved and the absence does not permit five (5) days' advance notice. Such leave request must include the specific emergency reason. In general, only emergency absences that are not a consequence of the action or choice of the teacher, will be approved. In the event of an emergency not allowing for five (5) days' notice, the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor and the human resources office as soon as possible for approval prior to the requested leave. However, 30 days' notice is required by law if the leave qualifies as FMLA leave. The administrator will respond promptly to the employee's written request.

Prior to the payment of any leave for personal illness or illness or death in the immediate family, the Board may require a statement from a medical doctor certifying the nature and duration of the illness involved. In the case of death, the Board may require proof of death or relationship.

2. **Authorized Leave** -- Employees may be granted up to five (5) days of authorized leave without pay for personal reasons after exhausting any other form of accumulated leave

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available by approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services or designee. Authorization will not be granted on any day preceding or following a holiday, holiday weekend or any vacation period, including the opening or closing days of the school year. The Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services or designee is authorized to approve exceptions in rare and unusual circumstances. Application for authorized leave shall be made in writing at least ten (10) days in advance. In the event of an emergency not allowing for ten (10) days' notice, the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor and the human resources office as soon as possible for approval prior to the requested leave. Initial duration and/or extension of authorized leave may be granted in extraordinary circumstances with or without pay when such extension is in the best interest of the school district. The employee may be responsible for payment to continue employee benefits during this time. While the employee will retain accumulated sick and vacation leave, no accrual will take place while the employee is on leave. Authorized leave days shall be noncumulative.

3. **Vacation** -- All professional staff employed on a 12-month basis will receive 20 days of vacation per year. Vacation days will accrue monthly. Vacation days will be converted to hours, with one day of vacation leave equal to the amount of hours the employee is scheduled to work each day. An employee may not accrue more than 40 days of vacation. Once an employee has accrued 40 days, no more days will accrue until days are used. Upon termination, employees will be paid for accrued vacation days to a maximum of 20 days. These days will be paid at an employee's current daily rate of pay. Vacation requests are to be submitted via approval form to the employee's supervisor. He or she will then submit the form with his or her approval to the human resources department for approval. Approval of vacation schedules will be based on requests of employees and the needs of the school district.

A district employee shall not be entitled to use vacation days during the period the employee receives Workers' Compensation for time lost to work-related incidents.

4. **Holidays** -- Staff will not work for the following holidays and will be paid for the holidays indicated:
- ▶ Independence Day
 - ▶ Labor Day (paid)
 - ▶ Thanksgiving Day
 - ▶ Christmas Day (paid if other than weekend)
 - ▶ Day for the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - ▶ Presidents' Day (paid)
 - ▶ Memorial Day

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5. **Professional Leave** -- Teachers may be granted professional leave upon the approval of the superintendent. Professional leave must be made at least five (5) workdays in advance of the absence and is not considered personal leave. Staff members returning from leave will be requested to share information with fellow staff members.
6. **Jury Duty** -- The employee will be paid regular pay provided that the Board is notified at least five (5) days in advance that a jury summons has been received; the Board receives verification listing the days of such service and the court in which the service was performed; and, within 60 days following the period of service, the employee presents to the Board the endorsed, uncashed check for jury service or a personal check equal to that amount minus the amount paid by the court for parking and mileage. The employee shall promptly report back to normal duty whenever released by the court or a court official for either all or part of any day, with a time allowance given for lunch if applicable.
7. **Military Leave** -- Pursuant to state law, employees taking military leave are entitled to up to 120 hours of paid leave for military duty. Pay will only be available for hours of military leave that occur at a time when the employee would otherwise have been required to be at work. The Board shall grant military leave as required by law. One (1) day with pay shall be allowed for any teacher required to take the selective service physical examination. This absence will not be charged against sick leave.
8. **Long-Term Disability Plan** -- Recognizing that situations occur when a staff member is incapacitated by illness or disability for an extended period of time and will not be returning to work, the Board of Education has adopted the following guidelines to reduce the financial loss attending such extended illness:
 - a. All personnel who are eligible for sick leave in the North Kansas City School District shall be members of this plan.
 - b. All employees must have worked for the district a minimum of 120 duty days to qualify for this plan.
 - c. An employee does not qualify for benefits under this plan until the employee has exhausted all current and accumulated sick leave and vacation, including any benefits from the sick leave pool.
 - d. When allowed, claims shall be paid according to the following schedule:

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- 1) A minimum of 120 duty days to five (5) consecutive work-calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 1/3 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/4 the daily rate.
 - 2) Six to nine (6-9) consecutive work- calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 1/2 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/3 the daily rate.
 - 3) Ten (10) or more consecutive work- calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 3/4 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/2 the daily rate.
 - 4) Each employee may only receive payment for a total of 120 days under the district's plan, regardless of whether the payments were for one (1) or several incidents. Employees who leave the district and return to the district are limited to a total of 120 days regardless of how many times they are re-employed.
- e. An employee receiving a long-term disability benefit will be required to provide medical certification of the medical condition pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act as a condition of receiving payments. Even if an employee is not eligible for FMLA, the district will rely on the FMLA medical certification process and retains the right to require the employee to submit to an examination by a health care provider of the district's choice if the district has reason to doubt the validity of the medical certification provided by the employee. If an employee refuses to provide medical certification or to submit to an examination, the employee forfeits any benefit under this policy.
9. **Election Leave** -- Any employee who is appointed as an election judge pursuant to state law may be absent on any election day for the period of time required by the election authority. The employee must notify the district at least seven (7) days prior to any election in which the employee will serve as an election judge. No employee will be terminated, disciplined, threatened or otherwise subjected to adverse action based on the employee's service as an election judge.

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Pregnancy, Childbirth and Adoption Leave

A pregnant employee shall continue in the performance of her duties as long as she is able to do so and as long as her ability to perform duties is not impaired, based on medical opinion.

The employee shall be granted sick leave during periods of pregnancy-related disability and, if necessary, an unpaid leave of absence to begin at the time recommended by her physician. The employee shall return to duty when she is physically able, based on medical opinion, except that this paragraph creates no rights extending beyond the contracted period of employment.

Pregnant employees shall be treated the same as other employees who are similar in their ability or inability to work for all purposes under this policy.

Upon written request, an employee with a length of service of 120 days or more shall be granted up to 30 days' leave with pay for the purpose of child adoption. Such leave shall commence immediately following the date of initial custody and shall be taken from accumulated sick days, but in no case will the leave extend beyond 45 calendar days after the date of initial custody of the child. If no such accumulation exists, the days shall be granted without pay. The employee shall inform his or her supervisor(s) of the anticipated date as soon as possible. Upon return from such leave the employee shall be returned to the position he or she held when the leave commenced if such position exists. If the position no longer exists, the returning employee will be placed in a comparable position. In the event both parents are district employees, only one will be eligible to take the entire leave. However, the leave may be shared by both employees.

An employee must notify the district of the need for and anticipated duration of the leave at least 30 days before leave is to begin, if foreseeable. If 30 days' notice is not practicable, the employee must give as much notice as possible.

These rules are subject to pre-emption by the FMLA as necessary for FMLA-eligible employees.

Family/Medical Leave

Family and Medical Leave Act cases will be administered in accordance with federal law.

For all FMLA purposes, the district adopts a 12-month leave year beginning on July 1 and ending the following June 30. All eligible employees are entitled to family/medical leave for a period not to exceed 60 workdays per leave year. When an employee has an absence (taken as paid or unpaid leave) AND the absence meets the criteria to be an FMLA-qualified absence, the district will designate such absence as part of the employee's total annual FMLA entitlement. If any employee is on a Workers' Compensation absence due to an injury or illness that would also qualify as a

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serious health condition under the FMLA, the same absence will also be designated as FMLA-qualifying and charged against the employee's FMLA-protected time entitlement.

The district shall apply paid leave, including sick leave, personal leave and vacation time, to an FMLA absence to the extent allowed by law, giving proper notice to the employee. If an employee's accrued paid leave is exhausted but an FMLA-qualifying reason for absence persists, or a new FMLA-qualifying reason for absence occurs, the resulting absences will continue to be protected FMLA leave until the aggregate of 12 workweeks of designated FMLA leave has been reached, but such absences will be unpaid.

Employees who take leave without pay under the provisions of this section shall be entitled to continued participation in the district's health plan. However, an employee who fails to return to work after the expiration of his or her allowed leave time will be expected to reimburse the district for those benefits paid, as required by law. An employee who returns to work for at least 30 calendar days is considered to have "returned" to work. An employee who transfers directly from taking FMLA leave to retirement, or who retires during the first 30 days after the employee returns to work, is deemed to have returned to work.

To be eligible for unpaid family/medical leave, the employee must have:

1. Been employed in the district for at least 12 months (but not necessarily consecutively), and
2. Been employed for at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave (full-time teachers are deemed to meet this requirement), and
3. Given at least a 30-day notice for foreseeable circumstances.

FMLA-qualified leave includes the following reasons:

1. Birth and first-year care of the employee's child.
2. Adoption or foster placement of a child with the employee.
3. Serious health condition of the employee or the employee's spouse, child or parent.

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Additional Provisions -- Leave for Health-Related Reasons

The district reserves the right to require certification of the serious health condition of the employee or employee's family member. Employees on FMLA-designated leave must periodically report on their status and intent to return to work. The district will also require that an employee present a certification of fitness to return to work.

FMLA leave may be taken intermittently as required for the health of the employee or family member or as reduced-schedule leave in hourly increments. Under circumstances allowed by law, the district may require instructional employees who request intermittent leave due to medical reasons to take block leave or to find an alternative placement for the period of planned medical treatment. However, if the intermittent leave equals more than 20 percent of instructional time, special rules apply as set forth by law. When an instructional employee on FMLA leave is scheduled to return close to the end of a school term, the district may elect to use a special rule to prolong the employee's leave until the beginning of the next school term, thus extending the leave beyond the period where an FMLA-qualifying reason exists. In such an instance, the prolonged leave time is unpaid and is not charged against the employee's annual FMLA entitlement. In cases where the special rules for instructional employees apply, the superintendent may apply those special rules or the general FMLA rules as better serves the interest of the district.

Notice

Information concerning the employee's rights under this act will be posted in accordance with law and will be provided in any employee handbooks that are distributed.

For any employee who is not eligible for the FMLA leave, including any employee who has exhausted available FMLA time, requests for leave and the use of benefits time shall proceed according to the district's established policies, and the procedural requirements of the FMLA shall not apply where they are not mandated by law.

Deductions for absences not due to authorized school business and not permitted under this or other leave policies shall be made on the basis of a ratio of one to the total working days of the annual contracted employment for each day's absence.

An employee who is absent for reasons other than those specified under Board rules, or by reason of fraudulent application of district leave provisions shall be subject to disciplinary action that may include pay reduction, termination of employment or non-renewal of employment.

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Note: The reader is encouraged to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information in support of this policy area.

Adopted: 02/11/2003

Last Revised: 08/26/2003

Cross Refs: DLB, Salary Deductions
GCBC, Professional Staff Fringe Benefits
GCBDB, Professional Staff Long-Term Leaves and Absences
GCL, Professional Staff Development Opportunities

Legal Refs: §§ 105.102, .270, .271, 115.639, 168.122, 169.595, RSMo.
Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as Amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000 e(k)
29 C.F.R. § 1604.10
Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. §§ 2611-2619
Aubuchon v. Gasconade County R-1 School Dist., 541 S.W.2d 322 (Mo.App. 1976)
Stewart v. Bd. of Ed. of Ritenour, 574 S.W.2d 471 (Mo.App. 1978)
Willis v. School Dist. of Kansas City, 606 S.W.2d 189 (Mo.App. 1980)

North Kansas City School District, Kansas City, Missouri

APPENDIX D

POLICY GCBDA REVISED 2006

FILE: GCBDA
Critical

PROFESSIONAL STAFF SHORT-TERM LEAVES AND ABSENCES

Consistent contact with students and staff is important to the learning environment and district operation and therefore is an essential duty of a professional staff member's position. When a professional staff member is routinely tardy, frequently absent or is absent for an extended period of time, the learning environment and district operations deteriorate and the students suffer.

Professional staff employees may be terminated for excessive absences or tardiness. Unless authorized by the Board or the superintendent or otherwise authorized by law, an employee's absence or tardiness is considered excessive if it:

- ▶ Is for a reason not granted as paid or protected leave under Board policy.
- ▶ Exceeds the number of days allotted by the Board for that particular leave.

Even if the absence or tardiness is authorized by the Board or the superintendent, if the absence or tardiness occurs for a reason not granted as paid leave under Board policy or if it exceeds the number of days the employee has been granted under a designated leave, the employee's salary will be docked.

No employee will be disciplined or terminated for absences qualifying for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) or other applicable law.

The district may require an employee to present documentation for an absence or a certification of fitness to return to work whenever the employee is absent from work due to the employee's health.

Newly hired employees must have worked one (1) day of the current contract year to qualify for leave.

Leave will not be granted for an employee due to adverse weather conditions.

Leave will not be granted for an employee to participate in activities in violation of Board of Education policy or law.

Any certificated employee who is a member of a retirement system shall remain a member during any period of leave under sick leave provisions of the district or under Workers' Compensation. The employee shall also receive creditable service credit for such leave time if the employee makes contributions to the system equal to the amount of contributions that he or she would have made had he or she been on active service status.

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The following leaves with pay will be accorded full-time professional staff employees:

1. **Discretionary Leave**

- a. **Annual Discretionary Leave (ADL)** – Annual discretionary leave for the entire year will be advanced to the employee after the first day of work. Professional staff employees whose assignments call for full-time employment only during the regular school term will be entitled to ten (10) days of annual discretionary leave. Employees serving ten (10) months shall be entitled to 11 days per year; employees serving 11 months shall be entitled to 12 days per year; and employees serving 12 months per year shall be entitled to 13 days per year. The maximum number of days allowed per year shall not exceed the annual rate of accumulation for the respective contract period.
- b. **Carryover Discretionary Leave (CDL)** – Annual discretionary leave and perfect attendance incentive days not used for leave or the cash-out option will be carried over to the following year for use in the event of extended illness for self/family or bereavement. Carryover discretionary leave balances will not be available for cash in.

Absences may be charged against discretionary leave for the following reasons:

- a. Illness, hospitalization related to childbirth, temporary disability or permanent disability of the employee. The Board reserves the right to require a physician's certification attesting to the illness or disability of the claimant and/or inclusive dates of the employee's incapacitation if the absence is for more than ten (10) consecutive days or ten (10) days for the same reason. FMLA health certification procedures apply to FMLA-qualifying absences, even if such absences are paid discretionary leave. The district requires the use of accumulated leave, if available, during an FMLA period. The district need not wait ten (10) days before requesting an FMLA Certification of Health Care Provider form in conjunction with a preliminary designation that FMLA applies to an absence.
- b. Illness or injury to, or hospitalization related to childbirth of a member of the immediate family. The Board defines "immediate family" to include spouse, parents, children, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, brothers, sisters, foster children and foster parents of an employee or employee's spouse. (Note: "Family" for FMLA purposes is more limited.) Upon approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services, this leave may be extended to such persons who have, until the date of illness or injury, resided regularly with and as a

FILE: GCBDA
Critical

member of the household of the employee requesting leave. Approval should be requested in advance, except in cases of emergency.

- c. Wedding or graduation for a member of the immediate family. The Board defines "immediate family" to include spouse, parents, children, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, foster children or foster parents of an employee or employee's spouse.
- d. Observance of a religious holiday that is normally observed by persons of the employee's faith.
- e. Conducting personal business of such a nature that it cannot be performed on a Saturday, Sunday or before or after school hours, including parent-teacher conferences.
- f. Leave under the FMLA.
- g. Other situations as approved by the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services.

A district employee shall not be entitled to use discretionary leave days during the period the employee receives Workers' Compensation for time lost to work-related incidents.

Leave requests for other than unforeseen circumstances (illness, emergencies, etc.) shall be submitted in writing on a district form to the employee's supervisor at least five (5) days in advance. The employee must call the Substitute Employee Management System by the end of the day in which the request is confirmed.

Discretionary leave for other than unforeseen circumstances shall not be available on the duty days preceding or following a holiday break or vacation period recognized in the school calendar, including the opening or closing days of the school year. In cases involving foreseen leave for extraordinary situations where the absence does not jeopardize the effective operation of the building or department, the request needs to be submitted to Human Resources (HR) and approved five (5) days in advance of the absence. In general, only emergency absences that are not a consequence of the action or choice of the employee, will be approved. In the event of an emergency not allowing for five (5) days' notice, the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor and HR as soon as possible for approval prior to the requested leave. However, 30 days' notice is required by law if the leave qualifies as FMLA leave. The administrator will respond promptly to the employee's written request.

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Without HR authorization, an administrator/supervisor may approve a maximum of two (2) discretionary leave days for other than unforeseen circumstances per employee category per site or department per day, or up to five percent (5%) of the total staff, whichever is greater. This approval is based on the educational effect the total number of absences will have on the site or department and the ability to secure substitutes.

Discretionary leave for all employees, taken on Monday or Friday, requires a notification be made in advance to the employee's administrator/supervisor. This includes absences due to unforeseen circumstances. The employee must contact his/her administrator and/or immediate supervisor to confirm his/her absence in addition to calling the Substitute Employee Management System.

Discretionary leave taken for unforeseen circumstances on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday does not require a call to the employee's supervisor unless it precedes or follows a holiday, break or vacation period recognized in the school calendar, including the opening or closing days of the school year.

When an employee has utilized three (3) consecutive discretionary days of absence, for additional day(s) connected to the same absence, the employee must contact his/her site administrator/supervisor. It will be necessary for the employee to provide a reason for the additional absence(s). After ten (10) consecutive days of absences or ten (10) days of absence for the same reason, the supervisor is required to notify the Human Resources Department of the employee's absences and advise the employee to complete Family Medical Leave forms. Depending on the circumstance, as per Board policy CF, the administrator/supervisor may require documentation to confirm the reason for absence.

Prior to the payment of any leave for personal illness or illness or death in the immediate family, the Board may require a statement from a medical doctor certifying the nature and duration of the illness involved. In the case of death, the Board may require proof of death or relationship.

Cash-In Option – Unused annual discretionary leave provided for the current school year and perfect attendance incentive days may be cashed in each year at the rate of \$90 per day as listed below:

1. Perfect attendance incentive days may be cashed in at the end of the appropriate work calendar.
2. A minimum of 30 days of the carryover leave must be maintained throughout the annual discretionary leave cash-in option.

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3. A maximum of half the days of annual discretionary leave plus perfect attendance incentive days may be cashed in at the end of the appropriate work calendar once an employee is able to maintain the 30-day minimum balance of discretionary leave.
4. At the end of an employee's seventh year of service with the district, the employee may begin cashing in all annual discretionary leave days available plus perfect attendance incentives.

An employee would not be eligible for cash option if days were owed to the short-term medical leave program.

Any employee who is terminated will forfeit all rights to the accumulated leave cash-in option.

Attendance Incentive – All employees will be eligible to receive an attendance incentive on a biannual basis (July 1 to winter break and January 1 to June 30), based on the total number of hours worked. The percentage of hours worked will be proportionate to the number of hours worked each day. All leave required to be reported shall count in computing an employee's attendance incentive except court leave, jury duty, military leave and FMLA leave.

Prior to July 1, 2012, upon termination of employment with the North Kansas City School District after 15 years of service (as defined in Board policy), a certificated employee shall be paid an amount equal to \$30 times the total unused days of discretionary leave provided such payment and the total of cash-in funds received do not exceed \$5,700.

Employee Death Benefit – Upon an employee's death, up to 60 days of available discretionary leave will be paid at the rate of \$90 per day to the employee's next of kin or designated beneficiary.

Falsification of Discretionary Leave – An employee who falsifies, states an incorrect reason, or fails to report an absence will be docked for the absence(s), lose discretionary leave associated with the absence(s), issued a letter of reprimand, and will not be eligible for the discretionary leave cash-in option for the current year. Depending on the severity and/or repetition of the offense, the employee may face disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Review – This change in attendance/absence policy will be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. If it is determined these changes are costly or are

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- not meeting the stated objectives, the policy may be modified, eliminated, or the former policy reinstated.
2. **Court leave** – If a subpoena is directly related to his or her school duties, the employee will be released for court appearance without loss of discretionary leave. Other court appearances will be deducted from the employee's discretionary leave.
 3. **Bereavement Leave** – In the event of death in a certificated employee's immediate family, the certificated employee may be absent with pay for up to three (3) days annually at district expense. Additional days used for the purpose of attending the funeral or making necessary family arrangements may be charged to the employee's discretionary leave. For the purposes of this paragraph, the immediate family is defined as parent, brother, sister, spouse, child, grandparent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandmother-in-law, grandfather-in-law, grandchild, foster child, foster parent, aunt, uncle, niece and nephew. Upon approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services, this leave may be extended to such person who have, until the date of death, resided regularly with and as a member of the household of the employee requesting leave. Approval should be requested in advance, except in cases of emergency. The Board of Education may require proof of death and relationship prior to payment of such leave.
 4. **Authorized Leave** -- Employees may be granted up to five (5) days of authorized leave without pay for personal reasons after exhausting any other form of accumulated leave available by approval of the Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services or designee. Authorization will not be granted on any day preceding or following a holiday, holiday weekend or any vacation period, including the opening or closing days of the school year. The Associate Superintendent-Administrative Services or designee is authorized to approve exceptions in rare and unusual circumstances. Application for authorized leave shall be made in writing at least ten (10) days in advance. In the event of an emergency not allowing for ten (10) days' notice, the employee should contact his or her immediate supervisor and HR as soon as possible for approval prior to the requested leave. Initial duration and/or extension of authorized leave may be granted in extraordinary circumstances with or without pay when such extension is in the best interest of the school district. The employee may be responsible for payment to continue employee benefits during this time. While the employee will retain accumulated discretionary and vacation leave, no accrual will take place while the employee is on leave.
 5. **Vacation** -- All professional staff employed on a 12-month basis will receive 20 days of vacation per year. Vacation days will accrue monthly. Vacation days will be converted to hours, with one (1) day of vacation leave equal to the amount of hours the employee is

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scheduled to work each day. Unused days may not be cashed in but may be carried over for future use to a maximum of 40 days. Upon termination, employees will be paid for accrued vacation days to a maximum of 20 days. These days will be paid at an employee's current daily rate of pay. Remaining accrued days may only be used with the permission of the immediate supervisor. Vacation requests are to be submitted via approval form to the employee's supervisor. He or she will then submit the form with his or her approval to HR for approval. Approval of vacation schedules will be based on requests of employees and the needs of the school district.

A district employee shall not be entitled to use vacation days during the period the employee receives Workers' Compensation for time lost to work-related incidents.

6. **Holidays** -- Staff will not work on the following holidays and will be paid for the holidays indicated:

- ▶ Independence Day
- ▶ Labor Day (paid)
- ▶ Thanksgiving Day
- ▶ Christmas Day (paid if other than weekend)
 - ▶ Day for the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - ▶ Presidents' Day (paid)
- ▶ Memorial Day

7. **Professional Leave** -- Teachers may be granted professional leave upon the approval of the superintendent. Professional leave must be made at least five (5) workdays in advance of the absence and is not considered discretionary leave. Staff members returning from leave will be requested to share information with fellow staff members.
8. **Jury Duty** -- The employee will be paid regular pay provided that: a) the Board is notified at least five (5) days in advance that a jury summons has been received; b) the Board receives verification listing the days of such service and the court in which the service was performed; and c) the employee provides verification within five (5) days following the period of service. The employee shall promptly report back to normal duty whenever released by the court or a court official for either all or part of any day, with a time allowance given for lunch if applicable.
9. **Military Leave** -- Pursuant to state law, employees taking military leave are entitled to up to 120 hours of paid leave for military duty. Pay will only be available for hours of military leave that occur at a time when the employee would otherwise have been required to be at work. The Board shall grant military leave as required by law.

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10. **Short-Term Medical Leave Program** -- The purpose of the short-term medical leave program is to assist employees in the event of extended disability, illness or injury to the employee or immediate family. The short-term medical leave program is established to provide assistance to employees in extraordinary health-related circumstances.

The short-term medical leave program will be administered by the Director of Human Resources-Benefits. The North Kansas City School District has the authority to construe this policy and to determine all questions that arise under it. District interpretations are binding on all employees.

Eligibility

- a. The short-term medical leave program is provided to all employees of the North Kansas City School District who are eligible to earn discretionary leave and have been employed for a minimum of 120 duty days.
- b. Employees who are otherwise eligible for Family Medical Leave (FMLA) may borrow days from the short-term medical leave program for any FMLA-qualifying reason.
- c. Employees who have met the threshold eligibility for participation in this program (eligible for discretionary leave and been employed a minimum of 120 duty days), but who are not otherwise FMLA-eligible, may borrow from the short-term medical leave program for their own serious health condition or to care for a spouse, parent or child's serious health condition as defined in FMLA.
- d. An employee must have exhausted his or her discretionary leave or vacation time in order to utilize days from the short-term medical leave program.

Application must be submitted to Human Resources within ten (10) days of depletion of accrued leave.

Provisions

- a. An employee may borrow, when approved, up to a maximum of 30 days.
- b. Upon return to service, the employee must repay the short-term medical leave program for the borrowed days at a rate not less than three (3) days per year thereafter for each year days were borrowed.

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- c. If the employee retires, resigns, is terminated or granted an extended leave at any time after his or her return to service, an amount will be deducted from the employee's last month's earnings, equal to the daily rate established for his or her category of employment for those days not returned to the short-term medical leave program. If the nature of the illness or injury is such that an employee is unable to work, no repayment will be required. In the event of death or permanent disability, all debt to the short-term medical leave program is forgiven.
 - e. If an employee's application is denied, the employee may file an appeal. To appeal, a written notice of appeal must be submitted to the Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services within five (5) days of the denial.
11. **Long-Term Disability Plan** – Recognizing that situations occur when a staff member is incapacitated by illness or disability for an extended period of time and will not be returning to work, the Board of Education has adopted the following guidelines to reduce the financial loss attending such extended illness:
- a. All personnel who are eligible for discretionary leave in the North Kansas City School District shall be members of this plan.
 - b. All employees must have worked for the district a minimum of 120 duty days to qualify for this plan.
 - c. An employee does not qualify for benefits under this plan until the employee has exhausted all current discretionary leave and vacation, including any benefits from the short-term medical leave program.
 - d. When allowed, claims shall be paid according to the following schedule:
 - 1) A minimum of 120 duty days to five (5) consecutive work-calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 1/3 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/4 the daily rate.
 - 2) Six to nine (6-9) consecutive work- calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 1/2 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/3 the daily rate.

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- 3) Ten (10) or more consecutive work- calendar years of service in the district -- the first qualified 30 days of absence shall be reimbursed at 3/4 the daily rate. Additional absences for this or future claims shall be reimbursed at 1/2 the daily rate.
 - 4) Each employee may only receive payment for a total of 120 days under the district's plan, regardless of whether the payments were for one (1) or several incidents. Employees who leave the district and return to the district are limited to a total of 120 days regardless of how many times they are re-employed.
- e. An employee receiving a long-term disability benefit will be required to provide medical certification of the medical condition pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act as a condition of receiving payments. Even if an employee is not eligible for FMLA, the district will rely on the FMLA medical certification process and retains the right to require the employee to submit to an examination by a health care provider of the district's choice if the district has reason to doubt the validity of the medical certification provided by the employee. If an employee refuses to provide medical certification or to submit to an examination, the employee forfeits any benefit under this policy.
12. **Election Leave** -- Any employee who is appointed as an election judge pursuant to state law may be absent on any election day for the period of time required by the election authority. The employee must notify the district at least seven (7) days prior to any election in which the employee will serve as an election judge. No employee will be terminated, disciplined, threatened or otherwise subjected to adverse action based on the employee's service as an election judge.

Pregnancy, Childbirth and Adoption Leave

A pregnant employee shall continue in the performance of her duties as long as she is able to do so and as long as her ability to perform duties is not impaired, based on medical opinion.

The employee shall be granted discretionary leave during periods of pregnancy-related disability and, if necessary, an unpaid leave of absence to begin at the time recommended by her physician. The employee shall return to duty when she is physically able, based on medical opinion, except that this paragraph creates no rights extending beyond the contracted period of employment.

Pregnant employees shall be treated the same as other employees who are similar in their ability or inability to work for all purposes under this policy.

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Upon written request, an employee with a length of service of 120 days or more shall be granted up to 30 days' leave with pay for the purpose of child adoption or foster care placement. Such leave shall commence immediately following the date of initial custody and shall be taken from accumulated discretionary leave days, but in no case will the leave extend beyond 45 calendar days after the date of initial custody of the child. If no such accumulation exists, the days shall be granted without pay. The employee shall inform his or her supervisor(s) of the anticipated date as soon as possible. Upon return from such leave the employee shall be returned to the position he or she held when the leave commenced if such position exists. If the position no longer exists, the returning employee will be placed in a comparable position. In the event both parents are district employees, only one will be eligible to take the entire leave. However, the leave may be shared by both employees.

An employee must notify the district of the need for and anticipated duration of the leave at least 30 days before leave is to begin, if foreseeable. If 30 days' notice is not practicable, the employee must give as much notice as possible.

These rules are subject to pre-emption by the FMLA as necessary for FMLA-eligible employees.

Family/Medical Leave

Family and Medical Leave Act cases will be administered in accordance with federal law.

When an employee has an absence (taken as paid or unpaid leave) AND the absence meets the criteria to be an FMLA-qualified absence, the district will designate such absence as part of the employee's total annual FMLA entitlement. If any employee is on a Workers' Compensation absence due to an injury or illness that would also qualify as a serious health condition under the FMLA, the same absence will also be designated as FMLA-qualifying and charged against the employee's FMLA-protected time entitlement.

The district shall apply discretionary leave and vacation time to an FMLA absence to the extent allowed by law, giving proper notice to the employee. If an employee's accrued paid leave is exhausted but an FMLA-qualifying reason for absence persists, or a new FMLA-qualifying reason for absence occurs, the resulting absences will continue to be protected FMLA leave until the aggregate of 12 workweeks of designated FMLA leave has been reached, but such absences will be unpaid.

Employees who take leave without pay under the provisions of this section shall be entitled to continued participation in the district's health plan. However, an employee who fails to return to work after the expiration of his or her allowed leave time will be expected to reimburse the district for those benefits paid, as required by law. An employee who returns to work for at least 30

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calendar days is considered to have “returned” to work. An employee who transfers directly from taking FMLA leave to retirement, or who retires during the first 30 days after the employee returns to work, is deemed to have returned to work.

To be eligible for unpaid family/medical leave, the employee must have:

1. Been employed in the district for at least 12 months (but not necessarily consecutively), and
2. Been employed for at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave (full-time teachers are deemed to meet this requirement), and
3. Given at least a 30-day notice for foreseeable circumstances.

FMLA-qualified leave includes the following reasons:

1. Birth and first-year care of the employee’s child.
2. Adoption or foster placement of a child with the employee.
3. Serious health condition of the employee or the employee’s spouse, child or parent.

Additional Provisions -- Leave for Health-Related Reasons

The district reserves the right to require certification of the serious health condition of the employee or employee’s family member. Employees on FMLA-designated leave must periodically report on their status and intent to return to work. The district will also require that an employee present a certification of fitness to return to work.

FMLA leave may be taken intermittently as required for the health of the employee or family member or as reduced-schedule leave in hourly increments. Under circumstances allowed by law, the district may require instructional employees who request intermittent leave due to medical reasons to take block leave or to find an alternative placement for the period of planned medical treatment. However, if the intermittent leave equals more than 20 percent of instructional time, special rules apply as set forth by law. When an instructional employee on FMLA leave is scheduled to return close to the end of a school term, the district may elect to use a special rule to prolong the employee’s leave until the beginning of the next school term, thus extending the leave beyond the period where an FMLA-qualifying reason exists. In such an instance, the prolonged leave time is unpaid and is not charged against the employee’s annual FMLA entitlement. In cases where the special rules for instructional employees apply, the superintendent

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may apply those special rules or the general FMLA rules as better serves the interest of the district.

Notice

Information concerning the employee's rights under this act will be posted in accordance with law and will be provided in any employee handbooks that are distributed.

For any employee who is not eligible for the FMLA leave, including any employee who has exhausted available FMLA time, requests for leave and the use of benefits time shall proceed according to the district's established policies, and the procedural requirements of the FMLA shall not apply where they are not mandated by law.

Deductions for absences not due to authorized school business and not permitted under this or other leave policies shall be made on the basis of a ratio of one to the total working days of the annual contracted employment for each day's absence.

An employee who is absent for reasons other than those specified under Board rules, or by reason of fraudulent application of district leave provisions shall be subject to disciplinary action that may include pay reduction, termination of employment or non-renewal of employment.

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Note: The reader is encouraged to check the index located at the beginning of this section for other pertinent policies and to review administrative procedures and/or forms for related information.

Adopted: 02/11/2003

Revised: 08/26/2003; 06/13/2006

Cross Refs: DLB, Salary Deductions

Legal Refs: §§ 105.102, .270, .271, 115.639, 168.122, 169.595, RSMo.
Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as Amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000 e(k)
29 C.F.R. § 1604.10
Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. §§ 2611-2619
Aubuchon v. Gasconade County R-1 School Dist., 541 S.W.2d 322 (Mo.App. 1976)

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Stewart v. Bd. of Ed. of Ritenour, 574 S.W.2d 471 (Mo.App. 1978)
Willis v. School Dist. of Kansas City, 606 S.W.2d 189 (Mo.App. 1980)

North Kansas City School District, Kansas City, Missouri