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Abstract
If the totality of satisfactions that an employee obtains from the different aspects of his work situation were not enough to cause him to invest the extra energy occasionally required to get to the job, the employee would be absent from work (Metzner and Mann, 1953). This observation dealt with factors relating to motivating a teacher to go to work. While this observation is not always applicable, it is an example of a real situation that contributes toward the problem of teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism is not a new problem and has been the focus of a great deal of research (Manlove and Elliott, 1979; Lewis, 1981; Pitkoff, 1981; Elliott, 1982; Hill, 1982).
A REVIEW OF THE COSTS OF TEACHER
ABSENTEEISM AND METHODS
TO IMPROVE TEACHER
ATTENDANCE

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If the totality of satisfactions that an employee obtains from the different aspects of his work situation were not enough to cause him to invest the extra energy occasionally required to get to the job, the employee would be absent from work (Metzner and Mann, 1953).

This observation dealt with factors relating to motivating a teacher to go to work. While this observation is not always applicable, it is an example of a real situation that contributes toward the problem of teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism is not a new problem and has been the focus of a great deal of research (Manlove and Elliott, 1979; Lewis, 1981; Pitkoff, 1981; Elliott, 1982; Hill, 1982).

The financial cost was a prime consideration. In a 1977-78 study, the loss of time from teacher absence in the elementary and secondary schools alone cost more than one-half billion dollars for substitutes and $120 million in fringe benefits that teachers received whether or not they were in the classrooms (Bridges, 1980).

The instructional cost was one of the most critical concerns among educators. The instructional model in American schools was predicated on the interaction of students with a teacher. When the teacher was absent, generally no "alternative model" was available. The teacher had to be replaced by a substitute. A great deal of literature indicated that, with substitutes in the classroom, the regular instructional program tended to falter.
The Elliott (1982) study showed that substitutes were significantly less effective in instruction than student teachers.

With a situation that brought about problems of this magnitude, it was critical to consider solutions to them. For the period of time that attendance records have been recorded, educators have been trying to create incentive plans to bring about improved teacher attendance. One approach dealt with the concept of unlimited sick leave accumulations. This factor produced the lowest teacher absence rate then on record at the U.S. Office of Education (Ellsbree, 1939). Other approaches have dealt with financial incentives. These have been in the form of cash bonuses, yearly or upon retirement, increased insurance benefits, or unused sick days turned into personal days, to name a few.

Many different facets of teacher absenteeism have been investigated. This review will focus on two specific aspects. The first area of emphasis will deal with the financial and instructional costs of teacher absenteeism, seeking answers that explain how teacher absenteeism affects the educational program in these areas. The second area will deal with methods that can be used to improve teacher attendance. This will seek to find out which methods have been ineffective and effective with regard to improving teacher attendance.
Financial and Instructional Costs of Teacher Absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism has cost a great deal of money. Each day, 200,000 teachers throughout the country called in sick, a loss of 75 million hours of contact time with students. This cost school boards two billion dollars each year (Hill, 1982).

With regard to districts individually, the amount of money lost due to absenteeism varied upon the size of the district (Elliott, 1982). In a 1977 study, in districts with 300 to 2499 students, the annual cost of substitutes was $10,590.00. In districts with 2500 to 9999 students, the cost was $48,526.00. In districts with 10,000 to 24,999 students, the cost was $138,430.00. In districts with 25,000 or more, the cost was $486,955.00 (Hill, 1982).

In 1971-72, nine percent of all regular teachers' salaries in New York City went toward paying substitutes. In Illinois, the 1975-76 cost of absenteeism was $31 million. Pennsylvania reported nearly $88 million in total personnel costs associated with teacher absences. Tulsa, Oklahoma, spent $3000.00 per day for substitutes in 1977-78 (Elliott, 1982). In the 1980-81 school year, the Detroit Public Schools spent $6.2 million on substitutes (White, 1982). From 1966 to 1982, there was a five percent increase each year in teacher absenteeism across the United States (Hill, 1982).
The cost of one substitute teacher was high. On the average, districts paid from thirty-five to fifty dollars a day for a substitute teacher (Capitan, Castanza, and Klucher, 1980). The national average of paid absences in the United States in 1978-79 was eight days (Elliott, 1982). The dual payment of the regular teacher and the substitute almost doubled the cost of a day's work for the school district, while generally decreasing the amount of work accomplished. During the period of September 1975 to May 1976 in 135 Pennsylvania school districts, teachers were absent 206,429.5 days. All were filled with substitutes at a rate of $34.54 per day. The total projected cost for all 504 districts in Pennsylvania was $27 million, just for substitutes (Teacher Absenteeism Professional Staff Absence Study, 1978).

The real cost of teacher absenteeism was between five and ten times greater than the amount typically computed. The absent teacher's salary was the initial cost, then the salary of the substitute was next. After this were the costs of the salaries of administrators who had to contact, instruct, and evaluate substitute teachers. The final cost was the money schools paid into various employee benefit accounts, such as retirement, disability, and workmen's compensation (Lewis, 1982).

The financial burden of having to pay substitutes as well as the regular teacher was part of what researchers called the "double whammy." The district was forced to pay literally twice as much money to place a teacher in the classroom for an instructor
who was generally six to twenty times less effective than the regular teacher. Absenteeism made the educational process more expensive while reducing instructional effectiveness (Hill, 1982). Having a substitute teacher could have interrupted the continuity of education, which may have affected the child's learning process (State of New York Office of Education Performance Review, 1974).

Though financial aspects were important considerations, the instructional cost was probably more critical. Regular teachers were twenty times more effective than substitutes in secondary classrooms. Substitutes were chosen as much for their availability as they were for their successful teaching (Capitan, Castanza, and Klucher, 1980).

In New York, 18,000 teachers were surveyed in 1974 about how they viewed the effectiveness of a substitute compared to a regular teacher. A higher rating indicated greater teacher effectiveness. A regular teacher in a secondary school was given a rating of 5.01. The substitute was given a rating of 0.27 (Manlove and Elliott, 1979).

Methods to Improve Attendance

The solutions to improving teacher attendance were varied. In order to figure out solutions, the causes had to first be determined. A questionnaire which measured the dimensions of job satisfaction such as pay, co-workers, supervision, and the work
itself was sent to 488 California elementary school teachers in 36 schools. No statistically significant correlations were found between absenteeism and job satisfaction; however, some less significant differences between teachers with different levels of work interdependence were present. Work interdependence referred to the extent to which the organization's primary function was arranged and carried out jointly or collaboratively by employees (Pitkoff, 1981). There was no relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism when there were low or moderate levels of work interdependence. But in relatively high interdependent work settings, the job satisfaction of teachers was negatively related to absenteeism (Bridges and Hallinan, 1978).

The teacher contract itself was a possible cause of absenteeism. Expectations for outstanding attendance have decreased. The time allowed for teacher absences was increasing (Pitkoff, 1981). As additional days were made available to teachers through collective bargaining, it appeared that more of those days were being taken by teachers, and more teachers were taking those days (Manlove and Elliott, 1979). Absenteeism has continued to increase since the passage of collective bargaining legislation despite better pay, smaller classes, and more appropriate assignments (Elliott, 1982).

Financial incentives did not seem to be a significant factor in Bridges and Hallinan's 1978 study, but the Houston Public Schools sought ways to improve academic achievement, lessen teacher turnover, fill critical shortage teaching vacancies, improve
teacher attendance, and provide extended educational programs. This program was called the Second Mile Plan. In regard to improving teacher attendance, a teacher with five or fewer paid absences taken could sell the unused days back for cash. The results indicated that from the 1978-79 school year, when the program was first implemented, to the 1979-80 school year, teacher absences decreased by 1.3 days. From the 1979-80 school year to the 1980-81 school year, teacher absences decreased by only .1 day (Miller and Say, 1982).

The idea of incentive pay was not a new one, nor had it improved attendance every time that it had been implemented. In a school system in Pennsylvania in the 1970-71 school year, more than 500 instructional staff members were absent 3,847.5 days for personal illness, family illness, personal reasons, absence with deductions, and paid absences. To reduce absences, the administration offered three additional insurance benefits for specified reductions in sick leave. For 75 reduced absences, the Blue Cross "Extended 365" or its equivalent would be awarded. For 600 reduced absences, the Blue Cross "Extended 365" and a prescription drug plan with a one dollar deductible or their equivalent would be awarded. For 1,000 reduced absences, the Blue Cross "Extended 365", a prescription drug plan, and the Blue Shield Dental Plan or their equivalent would be awarded. The benefits earned would take effect the following school year. The result of the district's offer was that absences increased
by 58.5 days over those recorded for 1970-71; therefore, the staff members were not provided with additional insurance coverage for 1973-74 (Stemnock, 1973).

Incentives to promote better attendance have not always been related to finances. The literature indicated that simple recognition of a job well done, and not money, was a prime motivator of good attendance. This recognition could have come in the form of letting school out early, having recognition dinners, or having complimentary messages sent to the teacher (Hill, 1982).

As has been mentioned in the literature, not all of the methods used by school districts have been entirely successful; nevertheless, many approaches have been introduced to promote better teacher attendance. One of the more popular ideas that has been implemented was for the absent teacher to call the principal or immediate building supervisor personally (Manlove and Elliott, 1979; Capitan, Castanza, and Klucher, 1980; Elliott, 1982; Pitkoff, 1981). This practice was common in smaller districts; larger districts had their teachers call in sick to a switchboard operator. This has proven to be a method that allowed the absent teacher to avoid the confrontation with their immediate supervisor (Teacher Absenteeism Professional Staff Absence Study, 1978). Another method referred to in the literature was having the building supervisor take an active role in monitoring teachers' attendance, as well as encouraging
teachers to take their attendance seriously (Manlove and Elliott, 1979; Gendler, 1977; Lewis, 1982; Skidmore, 1984).

A successful program was developed in the Milwaukee Community School District in 1980. First of all, orientation material containing the district philosophy on good attendance was given to the teachers. Next, articles were published in the staff bulletins about sick leave. Periodic reminders were given to the principals, as well as periodic training in dealing with attendance matters. The principals were to be responsible for keeping accurate records and handling those teachers who misused sick leave. Other steps were to include attendance in the teacher's evaluation, increase publicity of the district sick leave report, recognize good attendance by giving some type of compensation, publicize public health assistance programs, and have the personnel director solicit information on the prospective teacher's attendance on their previous job. The result of these measures was a decrease in the absence rate from 8.74 days to 7.6 days per school year (School Administrator's Policy Portfolio, 1982).

Many schools did not monitor teachers' attendance properly either as individual cases or as a staff (Lewis, 1982). Failure to monitor could have led to abuses. Monitoring teacher absenteeism was a problem in itself. It could have been dealt with by the use of a computer. The computer could save schools money and increase the time teacher spend in class (Lewis, 1982).
From the 1972-73 school year to the 1973-74 school year, the Merrick, Long Island School District was able to cut absenteeism by fifty-five percent, 990 to 440 (Gendler, 1977). The method used was called the "total approach" which involved the school board, central office personnel, building administrators, and the cooperation of the faculty association. The specifics of the plan started with the school board adopting the superintendent's recommendation that district policies be modified to include criteria for teacher attendance. This was especially critical for the beginning teacher to be able to continue beyond the trial phase. In order for a teacher to be recommended for tenure, they had to demonstrate steady attendance during their probationary period. Next, the superintendent met with building administrators and department heads to explain the new attendance policies and made it clear that the administrators would be in charge of implementing the program. Next, the building administrators were to stay alert to unusual attendance patterns. They were to discuss the problem with the teachers in question to demonstrate their concern. The last step was to discuss the situation with the employees to give them a chance to improve. If they didn't improve, a written note was placed in their files. The key to the Merrick Plan success was the involvement of middle management in the programs. Without the principal taking an active role in the process, improvement in attendance would not have resulted (Gendler, 1977).
Throughout the literature, there was continued emphasis on the role of the building principal with regard to bringing the absence rate down. Besides the previously mentioned function of making direct contact with the absent teacher, principals should maintain contact with the ill teachers and speak directly to them upon return to work. Principals should not delegate these responsibilities to their secretaries, or the effect of their involvement would be lost (Teacher Absenteeism Professional Staff Absence Study, 1978). The principal was to counsel teachers when they had a pattern of incidental absences, were frequently ill on inclement weather days, were ill before or after a holiday or vacation period, were absent on special days, such as the first day of deer season, appeared to be in robust health the previous day, and reported an absence for illness for more than one day (Capitan, Castanza, and Klucher, 1980).

Personnel management and hiring practices were two factors that had a great bearing on teacher attendance. In the hiring process, it was important not only to investigate a prospective teacher's prior attendance record, but to inquire about the applicant's own philosophy with regard to attendance (Pitkoff, 1981). Once the applicant was hired, orientation programs had to be provided for them, as well as in-service presentations demonstrating the need for good attendance (Teacher Absenteeism Professional Staff Absence Study, 1978). The personnel director was to maintain central records of district-wide attendance,
publish district data in newsletters, publish a handbook of leave policies and procedures, and investigate cases of chronic abuse reported by principals (Hill, 1982).

Hill (1982) reported that some other possible strategies for improving attendance were making good attendance a requirement for tenure and reserve the right to request documentation of illness. One system in Gary, Indiana, allowed the teachers to monitor their own attendance. The teachers determined who was paid for an absence. The pool of substitute funds was given to their committee in September. What was left was distributed to the teachers in June. The system had its flaws, but there were not many absences (Manlove and Elliott, 1979).

Improving the work environment was also an important factor in regard to improving attendance. In an environment where teachers worked together well in an open climate, and the principal served as a facilitator, absenteeism was significantly lower than a school where the principal was aloof and there was a closed climate (Pitkoff, 1981). High absentee rates seemed to occur where the faculty did not agree upon the goals and policies of the community and the district. High community support and policy agreement outside the school, and an interdependent teaching staff inside the school seemed to lead to improved faculty attendance (Elliott, 1982).
Conclusion

Teacher absenteeism has cost school districts millions of dollars. If absenteeism were reduced, these dollars could be channeled into other areas of education such as supplies, educational programs, and even teachers' salaries. The financial cost is critical, but the biggest expense of teacher absenteeism appears to be the instructional cost. This was the price the students paid for inferior instruction from a substitute. The combination of these two costs was the so-called "double whammy." This was when a district was forced to pay more money and receive a lower quality of education.

It was apparent that teacher absenteeism has increased steadily for many years. It was a problem that had to be identified by all levels of the school district: the board of education, the central administration, the building administrators, and the teachers themselves. The high expectation the district set forth would not work without the total support of the personnel director who, through careful hiring practices and monitoring of district absenteeism could bring an awareness of the situation and stress the need for attendance to better the educational system. None of the programs for improving attendance would work without the commitment of the building principal. The principal had to consistently monitor teacher attendance and deal with problems as they occurred. By the same token, the principal had to praise
outstanding attendance of teachers. The principal should also have been directly involved in the actual report of individual absences by having the absent teacher call them directly instead of calling a switchboard operator at the central office. Throughout the literature, this was found to be the most widely accepted method of reducing teacher absenteeism.

If an environment were established within a school district where there was a great deal of community support and concern for the schools, absenteeism did not seem to be a critical problem. Within the school itself, the level of interdependence that existed on the staff seemed to be negatively related to teacher absenteeism. Financial incentives have worked in some cases and have not worked in others. Financial incentives seemed to work well in the short run. Long term success appeared to be rooted in the recognition of the problem by all levels of the district. A plan that was developed by the board of education must be carried out at all levels within the system.

There is a need for more research in teacher absenteeism, particularly in the area of the effect on student learning when a substitute is present. Clearly, the research indicated that the regular teacher was more effective in terms of student learning, but it would have been very helpful if there had been more information detailing the degree of ineffectiveness.

This is a concern that will always be important as long as there are children who will be affected. Improvement in
teacher attendance would seem to benefit not only the public's financial situation, but the quality of education as well.
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