Electronic Theses and Dissertations   Student Works

12-2015

Determining if Custodial Grandparents of Pre-K - Third Grade Students Perceive Delivery of Information and Services Offered as Effective in Decreasing Early Chronic Absence

Kimberly S. Cassidy
East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.etsu.edu/etd

Part of the Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons

Determining if Custodial Grandparents of Pre-K - Third Grade Students Perceive Delivery of
Information and Services Offered as Effective in Decreasing Early Chronic Absence

_____

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Teaching and Learning

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education

_____

by

Kimberly Seal Cassidy

December 2015

_____

Dr. Amy Malkus, Chair

Dr. Jane Broderick

Dr. Pamela Evanshen

Keywords: Primary caregiver, chronic early absence, custodial grandparents, kinship care

ABSTRACT

Determining if Custodial Grandparents of Pre-K-Third Grade Students Perceive Delivery of

Information and Services Offered as Effective in Decreasing Chronic Early Absence

by

Kimberly Cassidy

This study examined the delivery of information/services offered to custodial grandparents of

pre-k-3rd students to determine if they were effective in decreasing chronic early absence (CEA,

10% or more absences) as defined by Chang and Romero (2008). This mixed-method, multi-case

study focused on the perceived needs of custodial grandparents and examined if the school

system was meeting those needs. Participants included 5 custodial grandparents (4 females, 1

male, mean age = 51.8) who had grandchildren grades pre-k-3 in a Northeast Tennessee school

system who met the definition of CEA (as determined by Skyward Database), and 4 custodial

grandparents (all female, mean age = 53) whose grandchildren had the highest attendance rates

(top 5%). Three teachers and 2 Family Resource Center (FRC) staff also participated to provide

the school perspective. School database information and 3 researcher-developed questionnaires

were used. Results indicated that children in grandparent-led households were significantly more

likely to meet the criteria of CEA than children from parent-led households, X^2 (4) = 2857.4, $p <$

.000. Other major findings include: 1) despite a school-wide campaign, none of the grandparents

and most of the school personnel had not heard of or could not define CEA; 2) sickness was the

primary reason for absences, with all CEA grandparents noting that their grandchild was frequently ill; 3) the preferred method of communication was written (e.g., notes, flyers) followed closely by verbal (e.g., phone calls), which matched the actual communication used by school personnel (primarily notes or phone calls); 4) communication was primarily about events, trips, or conferences, followed closely by requests for money or to buy things; there was little communication about attendance or its importance; and 5) grandparents in the high attendance group were more like to own a computer, have internet access, use e-mail/social media, have both grandparents in the house, be employed, and have the parents also involved than were grandparents in the CEA group.

DEDICATION

For Kevin, Josh, Mom, Dad, Richard, Vonda, & The Squad (Darlene, Leah, & Melissa).
Your encouragement, humor, and dedication to my goals and dreams have made this possible. I
look forward to our next adventures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the love, support and encouragement I received from my husband, son, parents, and friends. I appreciate more now than ever the sacrifices my family and friends had to make for me to realize my professional goals. There are no words to adequately describe my deep gratitude for all they have provided me, though I hope to show them in the years to come.

I have benefited greatly from the mentoring of Dr. Amy Malkus, my committee chair and friend. She was often the voice of reason and humor during this tedious process, and she made this study something I am profoundly proud of and, hopefully, beneficial to the Early Childhood Education field. I also appreciate Drs. Pam Evanshen and Jane Tingle Broderick, committee members as well, for their direction and advice during my coursework when I began as a master's student many years ago. Their passion for early childhood is one reason I was driven to pursue my doctorate degree and, for that, I am grateful for their place in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

7

8

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chronic Early Absence

The Hawkins County School System decided for the 2013 school year to focus on

improving attendance with a particular cynosure on chronic absence, an action defined by Chang

and Romero (2008) as missing 10% or more of a school year. Implementing the theme "Every

Day Counts," schools promoted attending every day because chronic absence adversely impacts

student performance, is often overlooked, and is influenced by a variety of factors (Chang &

Romero, 2008). Among the identified groups that regularly have early chronic absence is a

subgroup of children being raised by grandparents that have their own school-related risks that

may contribute to chronic early absence, according to Chang and Romero (2008). This

population of grandparents raising grandchildren, their perceived relationship with the school

system, the risk factors in this family dynamic that may contribute to chronic early absence and

the transmission of information and communication from school to home is the primary focus of

this study.

A steady growth of grandparents becoming the primary caregiver of children in the

United States has prompted many studies concerning the wellbeing of this family dynamic. In

2010, about 1 in 14 U. S. children (7%) lived in a household headed by a grandparent, for a total

of 5.4 million children, up from 4.7 million in 2005. Hayslip and Kaminski (2010) reported in

review of literature concerning grandparents raising grandchildren and published in *The

Gerontologist,* that researchers noted spikes in the number of children living with grandparents

that coincided with the crack cocaine epidemic in the late 1980s and the recent "Great

Recession" between 2007 and 2009. Further, the study revealed that more than half of children

(54%) who were living with grandparents were being raised mainly by a grandparent who reported having primary responsibility for most of the child's basic needs. The numbers of children with grandparents as their main care providers grew from 2.5 million in 2005 to 2.9 million in 2010, a 16% increase over the decade (Hayslip, 2010). These increasing numbers have caused a plethora of research concerning the effects on grandparents, such as financial security, social isolation and health issues, and limited research about the developmental effects on grandchildren being raised by grandparents

Family units where the grandparents are the primary caregivers are assumed to be the most vulnerable of the many different types of family units since the legacy of childrearing must reconcile a "skipped" generation (Burton and Bengtson, 1985). The family dynamics will vary based on the reason for the shift in primary care, according to Burton and Bengtson (1985) whose research focused on black grandmothers and the issues of timing and continuity of roles. The study looked at the social clocks (defined as the natural "on time" age when a mother becomes a grandmother, typically between the ages of 42-58 years, and "off-time" age, typically between ages 25-38 years) of two groups of new grandmothers. The reactions of both groups were analyzed and determined to support the authors' theories that "on-time" grandmothers accepted the role more readily and fully, while "off-time" grandmothers struggled with the new role, and variables were considerably different. Burton & Bengtson (1985) determined that the reason for the shift in primary care was relevant to family dynamics depending on the age of the grandmother. In other words, if the younger grandmother became primary caregiver because the birthmother went to jail, the family dynamics were stressed. Timing of the change in roles played a significant part in the acceptance of the new role for the grandmother, as those who were "on

17

time" grandmothers and primary caregivers were more likely to accept the roles and responsibilities associated with assuming the primary caregiver role.

Much research has been done looking at family dynamics where the parent or parents are suddenly removed, such as sudden death or imprisonment. Jendrek's (1994) findings were based on a screening and in-depth interview with each of 114 grandparents who provided daily care to their grandchildren. The three categories of caregivers that developed from this study were: grandparents whose grandchildren live with them and with whom they have a legal relationship, grandparents whose grandchildren live with them but with whom there is no legal relationship, and grandparents whose grandchildren do not live with them but for whom they provide day care. A blend of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to produce a more complete picture of grandparents who provide care to grandchildren. Jendrek's (1994) findings reflected that there were three leading issues mentioned by a majority of the total sample: an increased need to alter routines and plans (79.5%), having more of a purpose for living (54%), and feeling more physically tired (55%). A majority of the total sample reported: having less privacy (58.6%), having less time for oneself (58%), and having less time to get everything done (53.6%). The summary of the report reflected that there is no question that children alter their caregivers' lives, both positively and negatively, especially when they live with the caregiver (Jendrek, 1994). Additionally, caregivers responsible for a child's daily personal and legal (decision-making) care felt profoundly the effect of providing such care. Jendrek (1994) also noted that grandparents without legal custody have no control over when or if the parent may take the grandchildren back, which may become an issue if the parent is unsuitable or even dangerous. The decision to go to court and gain custody is also very difficult for the grandparents

according to Jendrek (1994) because it entails a public announcement that the grandparents'

child is an unfit parent, and it involves uncertainty about the outcome.

Kelly's (1993) descriptive study examined caregiver stress in grandparents who were

raising grandchildren as well as the antecedents to the child's placement with grandparents. The

sample was 41 grandparents, aged 40 to 78 years, with a mean of 55 years (Kelly, 1993). The

participants reported increased psychological distress as measured by the Symptom Checklist-

90-Revised Inventory. Social isolation and restriction of role, as measured by the Parenting

Stress Index, were found to be predictors of increased psychological distress, and child

maltreatment, often involving parental substance abuse, was found to be the major antecedent to

children being raised by grandparents (Kelly, 1993).

Schwartz (1994) studied the challenges associated with raising non-biological children.

These studies note that the grandparents may also be in a state of readjustment, and perhaps even

grief, when the custodial change occurs. In reference to the Schwartz (1994) study, grandparents

may assume responsibility for stepgrandchildren if there is no one else to assume care, which

may have many other risk factors and issues that will not be directly addressed with this study.

Lev Vygotsky (1978), a Russian psychologist, focused his main studies in developmental

psychology and posited the concept of the zone of proximal development. This theory refers to

the way in which the acquisition of new knowledge is dependent on previous learning

(Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky noted that children need a safe, predictable base for exploration.

However, the nature of the environment produced by a parent who is addicted to drugs or

alcohol, going through a divorce or being incarcerated may chip away at the safe, predictable

base needed for normal development. Moving from such an environment to another household

where the primary caregiver is older; dealing with feelings of disappointment, grief, or anger

towards the parent; and having a caregiver who may not be prepared mentally, physically, or financially to take full responsibility for the grandchild or grandchildren may present additional developmental risks for the child.

Smith and Dannison (2003) compiled research that suggested the best ways to build successful partnerships between grandparents and schools. Their work reported that children in grandparent-headed homes may be challenged in their physical, cognitive or emotional development. They are more likely to have been prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol, have experienced abuse and/or neglect and have difficulties forming attachments, according to a research project by Minkler and Roe (1993) that looked at grandmothers as caregivers raising children of the crack cocaine epidemic. Minkler and Roe (1993) concluded in the comprehensive exploratory study of the experience of 71 African-American women raising their grandchildren because of the crack epidemic that physicians and other healthcare providers may find that grandparent caregivers may be the "hidden patients" of the crack cocaine epidemic. Thomas and Yarbrough (2000) noted in their review of research on grandparenthood in the latter decades of the 20th century that grandparents may not be fully capable of dealing with these added stresses of raising a child when they are experiencing a higher rate of depression, which translates to greater stress, poorer health, financial difficulties, and decreased family functioning. Compared with all children cared for by grandparents, children raised by custodial grandparents are more likely to have a disability, be teenagers, and have family income below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Dunham, Kidwell, and Portes (1988) offered a study of 54 mother-adolescent dyads from a follow-up of an early-age antipoverty intervention concerning possible developmental risks in children removed from the home for various reasons. Using measures such as the PSI

20

(Participatory Style of Interaction), the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, the Stanford Binet, and the California Test of Basic Skills, data revealed that the age of the child at the time of removal from the home is a major consideration when observing developmental risks, and stated that children raised by grandparents develop behavioral changes and emotional problems due to the absence of the biological parents, which causes the development of stress in most. Other causes of stress can be face-to-face meetings with the parents, or random phone calls, which may cause children to become upset and have mental stress, and they may also show anger more quickly, not obey grandparents, or develop guilt feelings concerning the parents.

Dunham et al. (1988) also identified other disorders that are common in children raised by grandparents, such as learning disabilities, insecurity, asthma and bronchitis, and dental problems. Smith and Palmieri (2007) collected data from 733 custodial grandmothers participating in a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health on custodial grandparenting and 9,878 caregivers from the 2001 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) who completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in reference to target children between ages 4 and 17. The SDQ is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire about 3-16-year-olds and is available in several versions to meet the needs of researchers. There are separate questionnaires for parents/primary caregivers, educators, and clinical staff to use to explore behavioral attributes. The data in the 2001 study revealed that custodial grandchildren are at greater risk of mental health problems than children in general, but noted that additional research was needed to determine the rates of specific diagnosable disorders experienced by custodial grandchildren, the underlying reasons for these disorders, and whether or not they vary by key sociodemographic and cultural influences. The Smith and Palmieri study (2007) also found that custodial grandchildren fared worse than children from the NHIS sample across all domains

measured by the SDQ subscales, regardless of the child's gender and whether reporters were recruited by population-based or convenience sampling methods. Additionally, comparisons within the sample of 733 custodial grandmother showed that higher levels of difficulties were reported when grandmothers were caring for boys, were recruited by convenience versus population-based sampling, and were white (Smith & Palmieri, 2007).

School-Related Risks for Children

In addition to identified issues in the family unit, there are some identified school-related risks for the child being raised by grandparents. An initial risk is a sudden transition to another school if the grandparents do not live in the same zone or town as the child's previous home. A lack of knowledge in navigating the current school system plays a role in the grandparents' ability to ask for and receive help, and previous negative experiences with schools and educational personnel may further complicate interactions. A literature review of wellbeing outcomes of children in kinship care by Sawyer and Dubowitz (1994) found that there are significantly higher numbers of children from grandparent-headed homes with learning disabilities and/or mental impairment, and with increased numbers repeating at least one grade in school when compared to the general population.

Park (2009) looked at an analysis of national assessment to determine how black and white students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading and found that children raised by grandparents living in low-income neighborhoods experience a gap in reading achievement and pre-reading skills between the ages of 2 and 5.5 years compared to children raised in traditional families. This gap may also be the result of stress brought on by the family crisis that landed them in the grandparents' care.

One positive effect noted in Park's (2009) study was that adolescents raised by grandparents were reported to have little impact on their academic achievement levels in math and reading. However, they were adversely affected in their socioemotional skills. Park (2009) noted that healthy socioemotional function was essential for allowing teens to develop into caring, non-violent individuals, and that physical, emotional, and behavioral problems may be more attributable to factors such as feelings of abandonment or prior instances of abuse before entering the grandparents' care.

Chronic Early Absence and Academic Performance

Adding to the many school-related risks for children being raised by grandparents may be the possibility of chronic early absence, a phrase coined by Chang and Romero in a 2008 study focusing on the impact of habitual absences, the likelihood of continued chronic absences in later grades, and ways that school systems miss the signs of early chronic absences. The study spurred school systems across the United States to take a look at attendance, especially in the early grades, and consequently made the authors the leading authorities on chronic early absence. Chang and Romero (2008) defined chronic early absence as missing 10% or more of a school year and identified three major issues of chronic early absence: chronic absence adversely impacts student performance, chronic absence is often overlooked, and chronic absence is influenced by a variety of factors. They found that this was particularly true for children living in poverty, but also that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, did worse academically in first grade if they were chronically absent in kindergarten (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms will be used and are defined for the purposes of this research study:

- *Primary caregiver* is the person or persons who take primary responsibility for someone who cannot care fully for themselves. This may be a family member, a trained professional, or another individual, but for the purposes of this study will be defined as the grandparent or grandparents. To determine if the grandparent is the primary caregiver, the researcher will use the database filter to identify only the families that meet the criteria of being the "primary caregiver" as reported on the school data sheet completed by the primary caregiver that is entered into the system. There are identifying descriptors in the school data sheet that sort out if the grandparent is living with the child's parents or if the parents are living with the grandparent, if the parent is still considered the legal "primary caregiver," or if the grandparent has legal custody, making them the primary caregiver in the database. This is the simplest and most accurate method to determine primary caregiver status as it is recognized by the school system.

- *Multi-generational family* is defined as more than one generation living under one roof. The term "multi-generational family" is used often in many of the studies in the literature review and refers to a household that has grandparents, grandchildren, parents, or aunts and uncles living together. However, this study will focus on the family units that consist of grandchildren living with grandparent(s) who may or may not have a parent or parents also living in the household.

- *Chronic early absence* is defined as missing 10% or more of school for any reason and is identified as an education risk factor by researchers (Chang & Romero, 2008).

- *Kinship care* is defined as any family member who takes legal or non-legal primary care of the child or children. This can be a grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or anyone who is a relative of the child or children.

- *Grandparent(s)* is defined as the biological grandparent of the child. For the purpose of this study, the grandparent(s) participating in the study will be the primary caregiver of the child(ren).

- *Disciplinary actions* is defined as a punishment or correction of behavior enforced by a figure of authority. For the purposes of this study, disciplinary actions refer to a punishment or correction given to a child because of an undesired action in the school setting. An example of disciplinary actions include in-school suspension where the student spends the entire school day in one room typically with a teacher's assistant doing classroom work apart from his/her peers; administration calling the child's guardian to discuss his/her behavior and agreeing to work together to stop the undesired behavior; or out-of-school suspension that removes the child from the school and he/she has to stay at home for 1, 2 or three days for punishment.

Summary

Chapter 1 outlined the steady growth of grandparent-led households, the identified developmental and school-related risks for children raised by grandparents, chronic early absence, and academic performance issues related to children being placed outside the birth home. Key terms used within the research were also defined. Chapter 2 provides a review of current literature regarding developmental theory and environmental influences on this population.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The University of South Carolina released a guide to theoretical frameworks in 2014 that

stated "a theoretical framework consists of concepts, together with their definitions, and existing

theory/theories that are used for the particular study" (Corvellec, 2014, p. 121). The theoretical

framework must demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the

research problem being investigated (Corvellec, 2014). Mertens (1998) noted that the theoretical

framework of any study "has implications for every decision made in the research process" (p.

3). The theoretical framework for this study is built upon Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial

development and Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which delve into stages of

development and outside factors that may contribute to overall wellbeing, including

social/emotional health. Overall wellbeing in both the adult caregiver and child/student is

relevant to this study because the environment in which the child lives may directly impact

academic success or lack thereof. Effective communication with school system employees is

crucial to academic success and overall wellbeing of the student, which is reflected in

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and is at the heart of this study.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson was a German psychologist who studied identity development and is

considered to be the father of psychosocial development (Erikson, 2014). His biography notes

that he suffered an identity crisis early in life due to not knowing his birth father and believing

his stepfather was his birth father for many years, which greatly influenced his interest in life

26

development phases. Erikson travelled extensively, choosing not to attend college as his stepfather desired, which led to a meeting with Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud's daughter. This meeting heavily influenced Erikson's decision to study psychology and led to a significant life change that eventually led Erikson to Yale and Harvard University as a professor. His best known work is his theory that each stage of life is associated with a specific psychological struggle that contributes a major aspect of personality. The stages identified by Erikson represented a "quantum leap in Freudian thought, which emphasized the psychosexual nature of development" (Erikson, 2014, para. 6).

Erikson's theory of development states that the ego develops as it successfully resolves crises that are distinctly social in nature, which include establishing a sense of trust in others, developing a sense of identity in society, and helping the next generation prepare for the future (McLeod, 2008). In reference to this study, understanding any risks to the grandparents or grandchildren in a skipped-generation custodial situation is crucial when viewed through the lens of Erikson's stages of development and determining if the child or grandparent successfully resolve crises in the developmental stage which they are in at the time of the transition.

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development maintain that people develop in a predetermined order. He focused on a child's socialization instead of his/her cognitive development throughout the lifespan. According to Erikson (1968), successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and successful interactions with others. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self. There are eight stages that Erikson focused on in his theory. Of those eight, generativity vs. stagnation (middle adulthood), and ego integrity vs. despair (late adulthood) are specific to this study for grandparents. For children, the

stages of initiative vs. guilt (ages 3-6 years) and industry vs. inferiority (ages 6 to puberty) are applicable to this study.

Initiative vs. Guilt

Initiative vs. guilt occurs around the age of three and continues to about age six. Children are assertive, according to the theory, initiate activities with others and, if given the opportunity, develop a sense of initiative and security in their ability to lead others. If children are not given the opportunity to develop in this stage due to either criticism or control, they may develop a sense of guilt, may feel like a nuisance to others and may remain followers who lack self-initiative (Erikson, 1968).

Industry vs. Inferiority

The industry vs. inferiority stage occurs from age six to puberty. Erikson (1968) theorized that children begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments, initiate projects, see them through to completion, and feel good about what they have achieved. Teachers play an increased role in the child's development, and if children are encouraged and reinforced for their initiative, they feel industrious and confident in their ability to achieve goals. If initiative is restricted, the child begins to feel inferior, doubting his/her own abilities and may not reach his/her potential, according to Erikson (1968).

Generativity vs. Stagnation

For grandparents, depending on age, the stages of generativity vs. stagnation or ego integrity vs. despair may be applicable. Younger grandparents who may be in the generativity vs. stagnation phase may have a different experience if rearing grandchildren, according to Erikson's theory. Generativity vs. stagnation occupies middle adulthood and is regarded as a time of "…establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson, 1968, p. 97). This is a stage

that focuses on the task of "care" and often results in a positive effect of generativity, which is defined as "making your mark on the world" (Erikson, 1968, p. 74). In a later publication, Erikson (1979) placed generativity in a context greater than one lifetime and referred to it as the biological link between generations. If this theory is valid, then the skipped-generation rearing of grandchildren may have less negative effects on both grandparents and grandchildren than some studies claim.

However, a study by Edelstein (1997) reviewing other researcher's opinions of the generativity vs. stagnation theory said that Erikson's generativity vs. stagnation theory was biased and that women in that phase of life may be moving into a natural self-focused period after having already devoted years to nurturing others. Edelstein's (1997) study stated there were two other significant weaknesses in Erikson's generativity vs. stagnation theory that needed to be reviewed and amended. "Erikson curiously fails to consider the extent to which sexual differences may be culturally conditioned" (p. 6) and he fails to address the midlife shift.

Edelstein's (1997) study found many other researchers disputed Erikson's generativity vs. stagnation theory for women in middle adulthood. Other authors who agreed with Edelstein's premise that Erikson's stagnation theory was biased were cited, and specific text is noted below:

- women increasingly use their skills to cope with life's problems (Nelson, 1994, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- engagement with the world leads to a new sense of self (Viederman, 1988, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- In their forties, women become increasingly the people they wanted to become (Lebe, 1982, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- women become less defensive, and show greater self-esteem and confidence (Bruch & Morse, 1972, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Helson & Moane, 1987, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Roose & Pardes, 1989, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- women evidence greater commitments to work (Barnett & Baruch, 1978, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Wink, 1991, as cited by Edelstein, 1997); not replacing, but equal to active mothering (Helson & Moane, 1987, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- women show more assertiveness (Chiriboga, 1975, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Guttman, 1987, as cited by Edelstein, 1997); and independence of judgment (Brusch & Morse, 1972, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Wink, 1991, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; York & York, 1992, as cited by Edelstein, 1997), qualities that have been traditionally viewed as "masculine." Women are better able to reach into the so-called masculine, or instrumental, attributes and integrate new qualities with established expressive abilities;

- women have access to more of themselves; they do not lose psychological characteristics but add to their existing personalities (Bruch & Morse, 1972, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Morse, 1978, as cited by Edelstein, 1997) and their attitudes change (Chiriboga, 1981, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Kelly, 1955, as cited by Edelstein, 1997; Mitchell & Helson, 1990, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- some women appreciate their changing roles. They have the opportunity to express dimensions of personality that had been previously suppressed as not congruent with their lives. Livson (1976, as cited by Edelstein, 1997) found that life expanded at 50 for non-traditional women who lived traditional lives;

- women feel authentic and describe their lives as "first rate" (Mitchell & Helson, 1990, as cited by Edelstein, 1997) and report feeling "like my own person" (Helson & Moane, 1987, as cited by Edelstein, 1997);

- women are able to bring both feeling and rationality into decision-making and develop more control over their lives (Mitchell & Helson, 1990, as cited by Edelstein). Middle adulthood offers less reactivity to emotions and actions become less colored by emotions (G. Labouvie-Vief, 1985; 1994, as cited by Edelstein, 1997).

These findings give pause to Erikson's theory that those aged 40 to 65 in the generativity vs. stagnation stage are ready to assume parenting a skipped generation with the vigor and resources they may have enjoyed in younger years. In fact, an optimistic outlook is that the younger grandparents may not suffer worsening health, as grandparents who are more advanced in age may experience when they assume custody or primary caregiving of the grandchildren. Edelstein (1997) notes that between the years spent caring for growing children and aged parents, women wish to preserve time free from the needs of others.

In reference to the impact of Erikson's (1968) generativity vs. stagnation phase on grandchildren, Erikson believed that seeds of identity are planted at a young age when the child recognizes himself/herself as a unique being, separate from his/her parents. Identity formation begins when the usefulness of identification ends. When taking on characteristics of others no longer provides satisfaction, the individual experiences a desire to shape his or her world in unique ways. The ages that are most relevant for this phase of identification are ages 6-11, according to Erikson (1968). Marcia (1993) reviewed Erikson's developmental theory in a psychosocial research review publication. He clarified that identity formation begins with a synthesis of childhood skills, beliefs, and identifications into a coherent, unique whole that

31

provides continuity with the past and direction for the future. An interruption in the "continuity" identified by Marcia (1993) by a child being displaced from parents could result in a rift of the child's identifications, thereby causing a developmental lapse that potentially could affect stages of development, as defined by Erikson (1968). According to Erikson's theory (1968), the unsuccessful completion of this phase of development could hinder the following stage of development, which is identity vs. role confusion, causing a domino effect within stages of the theory. For that reason, each stage should be considered a foundation for successful completion of the next stage.

Sandwich Generation.

Within the generativity vs. stagnation stage is a subgroup deemed the "sandwich generation" (Baumhover, 1983). This population is tasked with raising their children and caring for aging parents simultaneously. Miller (1981) noted in a study of the sandwich generation that these adults are subjected to a great deal of stress, specifically from the following situations:

- too many crises involving several members of the family from one or more generations occur at the same time;

- feelings become inflamed over issue of autonomy versus dependence, which is under constant negotiation among the generations;

- an elderly parent suffers an accident or acute illness, for instance a fractured hip, stroke, or mental illness (such as pseudodementia or senile dementia), resulting in hospitalization;

- a decision about institutionalizing an elderly parent is pressing;

- the leisure time of parents becomes a particular burden; and

- already stretched financial resources are acutely strained.

This population also has another dynamic - supporting grown children who are not quite independent in addition to their parents who have moved from autonomy to a degree of dependence. Miller (1981) specifies that the sandwich generation dealing with this family dynamic may suffer from being the major resource and support for the elderly and older children and that social services may be needed to help with the additional stress. The addition of caring for grandchildren in this generation could be an even greater burden, creating a disruption in the developmental level of both grandparent and grandchild.

Ego Integrity vs. Despair

Erikson believed that in the ego integrity vs. despair phase of the life cycle, typically age 65-death, the senior citizen tends to slow down on productivity and explore life as a retired person. The person in this phase often spends time contemplating accomplishments and is generally able to develop integrity if his/her life is deemed successful. If the person views his/her life as unproductive, feels guilt about the past, or that he/she did not accomplish life goals, he/she may become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, leading to depression and hopelessness (Erikson, 1968).

The grandparent or grandparents who are in the ego integrity vs. despair phase may have initially felt as though they had led a successful life. If they are suddenly thrown into the role of parent, whether due to the parent's death, incarceration, or other negative occurrence, the grandparent may begin to feel guilt or that he/she failed as a parent. Erikson (1968) theorized that if the person who has reached the stage of life where he/she can retire and enjoy life becomes dissatisfied with their past, they may become depressed or develop hopelessness. Either emotion is not an ideal environment for any child.

Disruption of Phases

The reality of role reversal when the grandparent becomes the parent once again has the potential to disrupt these phases as Erikson theorized. This can be true for both the child and the grandparent. A child in the midst of the initiative vs. guilt stage may be undermined in his/her struggle to develop security and a sense of initiative if he/she is suddenly removed from the parent. From age six to puberty, Erikson (1968) notes an increased role of influence for teachers, thereby underlining the importance of a good relationship with both the student and the family. Studies by Parker and Asher (1987) and Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey (1995) claim that when young children enter school without the abilities to work cooperatively with their peers, follow rules, listen to their teachers, and work independently, they are placed at greater risk for a wide range of negative outcomes including peer rejection and school failure. The Parker and Asher (1987) study focused on peer relations and later personal adjustment and asked the question if low accepted children are at risk for negative outcomes. Walker et al. (1995) sought to find strategies and best practices for reducing antisocial behavior in school. Both studies noted that a strong relationship between the teacher, child, and parents can be a tremendous support for children at risk of negative outcomes, a finding that echoes Erikson's (1968) support of a "good relationship" with both the student and the family during the initiative vs. guilt stage. A child who is being reared in the grandparent-led home may not have the support needed to achieve the crucial goals Erikson identifies in this phase of development of self. This may be particularly true if schools are not used to or set up for dealing with grandparents as primary caregivers. This may be the reason Erikson (1968) gave considerable time to studying the role of the teacher in the lives of children in the industry vs. inferiority stage and the identity vs. role confusion stage. "Erikson was clear that establishing identity during adolescence is not easy task" (Hamman &

Hendricks, 2005, p. 72). In order for an identity to be truly viable, it must confer both a sense of

uniqueness and, simultaneously, provide a sense of unity or sameness (Erikson, 1968). Teachers

can play an important role in the development of identity by becoming "sanctioners of

adolescents' capabilities," according to Erikson (1968, para.7). Further, the task of finding

positive aspects to value in students who are high achieving are easy, but identifying positive

capabilities in low-achieving, disengaged students, is often more of a challenge (Phelan,

Davidson, & Yu, 1998). Erikson (1968) suggested that the teachers should find ways of

sanctioning the capabilities of students by paying close attention to their activities and

identifying and communicating with them about some valued area in which they demonstrate

competence and that teachers should create an environment where students can explore

dimensions of their identities. This environment was called "the identity safe zone," and may be

crucial to the development of children who have unstable or unreliable home environments

(Erikson, 1968).

When Erikson was forming his theory, the problem of the sandwich generation and

displacement of parents in the lives of children was not as profound as it is in today's culture. In

fact, Erikson does not refer to grandparents in the parent role as a possible disruption in any of

the phases of development. The increase in statistics of grandparents rearing grandchildren

without the parents present is evidence enough of the growing problems that come with a change

in living arrangements. However, research can provide some clues as to the effect of disruption

on grandparents when they are thrown back into the role of "parent" to their grandchildren.

Hairston (2009) prepared a report for the Annie E. Casey Foundation that looked at

kinship care when parents are incarcerated. She stated that "given the significant role

grandparents and other relative caregivers are playing in the lives of children of incarcerated

parents, there is an urgent need to collect and analyze existing research, as well as conduct new research in key areas" (p. 5). The research that is available reflects that families who assume care of children are often living with incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level and are relatively unable to receive support services and monetary support, such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (Hairston, 2009). The Urban Institute researchers Ehrle and Geen (2002), found that 70% of children in voluntary kinship care were being cared for by caregivers over the age of 50 and that $1/5^{th}$ to a quarter of all children in kinship and non-kinship care lived in homes where the caregiver was highly aggravated. Two thirds of grandmothers in a study of kinship caregivers by Smithgall, Mason, Michels, LiCalsi, & George (2006) were reported to have incomes under $30,000, 90% were 50 or older, 80% had one or more health problems, and half said they needed or participated in mental health services.

If Erikson's ego integrity vs. despair phase of development is occurring during a disruption in the family unit, such as a grandparent assuming primary responsibility of a grandchild if the child's parent becomes incarcerated, deceased, or otherwise out of the caregiving circle, the grandparent(s) may begin to question their identity that was previously intact. The retired lifestyle of the typical grandparent may be disrupted even further because of a fixed income and the newly acquired expense of a dependent, navigating the court system and expenses that may occur with that. A turn from ego integrity to despair may occur for a grandparent who suddenly finds himself/herself in the position of caregiver when the parent is removed.

Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a Russian immigrant who studied psychology, music, development psychology and human ecology (Danner, 2009). He was dissatisfied with what he

saw as fragmented approaches to the study of human development, even stating "much of contemporary developmental psychology is the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 513).

This thought spurred Bronfenbrenner to develop an ecological systems theory which was detailed in his 1979 book *The Ecology of Human Development.* The child is the center of the system and is surrounded by five sub-systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory describes the child's environment within the context of the system that forms his or her relationships. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that an ecological orientation points to the importance of considering the relations between the various level systems as critical in understanding the development of the individual. The ecological theory provides the framework from which relationships are studied within the five levels and across the levels in an effort to understand their interconnectedness, bidirectionality, and reciprocal relationships that make up the whole system.

Microsystem

According to the theory, the microsystem is the immediate environment of the child and includes family, church, school, and neighborhood. These are direct influences on the child, affect development, and stand as the child's venue for initially learning about the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Rogoff (2003) simplified the impact of the microsystem in a research article identifying risks in development for children stating that this system "may provide the nurturing centerpiece for the child or become a haunting set of memories of one's earliest encounters with violence" (p. 372). In a review of Bronfenbrenner's theory, Swick (2004) noted

that the family is clearly the child's early microsystem for learning how to live and that the caring relations between child and parents (and many other caregivers) can help to influence a healthy personality.

For a child being removed from the home and placed with a grandparent, or any other caregiver, the stability of the microsystem is of the highest importance. There is no question that a period of adjustment will occur. However, the microsystem of the grandparent will, no doubt, have to be rearranged to accommodate the child. For example, a grandmother who regularly attends a ladies church meeting on Tuesday nights may have to forego the meeting when a grandchild comes to live with her because she may not have a babysitter to care for the child while she is gone. This change in her normal schedule can lead to depression and a feeling of isolation that can directly and indirectly affect the microsystem of the child.

If the child feels the strain of the lifestyle change in the grandparent, he or she may feel guilt or feel unwanted, regardless of the intentions of the grandparent. Couple this with the child's feelings about the events leading to his/her removal from the parents, and the ecological system as the child once experienced it may be unrecognizable.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem is defined as two or more interacting microsystems, which includes family experiences to school experiences, school experiences to church experiences, and family experiences to peer experiences to name a few. Bronfenbrenner (1979) noted that the real power of mesosystems is that they help to connect two or more systems in which child, parent and family live and that the most immediate level influences on child development are within the microsystem level, which consists of parental care, kinship care, immediate setting or environment in which the individual is situated. In a 2002 study by Krantz that investigated the

continuing evolution of state kinship care policies, he noted that children who have been separated from their biological parents frequently deal with emotional trauma regardless of whether they were abused or not. Kinship caregivers (e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) can alleviate the trauma by providing a sense of family support, according to Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994) and Freundlich, Morris, and Hernancez (2003). Both of these studies looked at school behavior of children in kinship care and additional risks to families of color, and will be discussed further in the literature review.

The mesosystem can be a support system to the family who is experiencing displacement/removal of the parents from the microsystem. A school-age child may be able to stay in the same school if the grandparent lives in the same area. This would allow the grandparent to rely on the teacher and other school system employees to provide some continuity to the child by having that familiar routine and people in place. A child who is removed from his/her neighborhood, school, and friends may feel like he/she has no one to talk to or depend on and has no friends or familiar faces in the new location. The presence of a supporting mesosystem, whether it be a church family, child care, a school, or an extended family, is crucial to providing a feeling of normalcy to a child experiencing a major life change when removed from a parent.

Likewise, a grandparent who is thrust into the position of primary caregiver will have to rearrange his or her lifestyle to accommodate the grandchild. His or her daily routine will immediately change, and things they once enjoyed doing may have to be delayed or stopped all together to accommodate the lifestyle and needs of the child. A strong support system, such as a church family, a close-knit neighborhood, or a strong school/home connection will help to support this family unit while they adjust.

Exosystem

The mesosystem expands to be influenced by the exosystem, which includes friends of the family, the family's work environment, neighbors, legal services, child welfare services, etc. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that the exosystem involves contexts we experience vicariously and yet have a direct impact on us. Galinsky (1999) offered an example in an analysis of Bronfenbrenner's theory that many children realize the stress of their parents' workplaces without ever physically being in these places. "Our absence from a system makes it no less powerful in our lives," according to a 1992 book by Garbarino that explored the social environment in which children and families lived (p. 72).

The exosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1995) consists of connections between two or more interactions or settings, but only one directly affecting the developing person. The social support system has been found to be a major predictor, according to a study by Kelley, Yorker, Whitley, and Sipe (2001). Kelley et al. (2001), along with Bowers and Myers (1999) and Goldberg-Glen (2000) examined an association between social-support and psychological stress among kinship caregivers, particularly grandparents. These studies found that lack of social-support undermines parenting practices and negatively affects caregiver-child relationships.

For a child, the exosystem may not have direct influences, but the indirect influences can be staggering. The court system is included in this level and can be the catalyst for any and all changes to the child's lifestyle. Also at this level are social services, which if implemented thoroughly, can support the family through the changes that occur when the parent is removed from the microsystem.

The grandparent can choose to either embrace the services that are available in this system or choose not to use them. The reasons for this may be many, but research such as

Lumpin's 2007 study on Grandparents in a Parental or Near-Parental Role: Sources of Stress and Coping Mechanisms, reflects that many of the grandparents placed in the position of becoming primary caregiver simply do not know how to navigate the court system or what types of help they are able to ask for when they become the primary caregiver. Much of what is available depends on if the court system is involved, what level of guardianship the grandparent assumes, what types of support systems the grandparents already have in place, and the education level of the grandparent.

If the grandparent is still employed, the workplace is also a direct influence on the child based on the work schedule of the grandparent. The child's schedule may be further altered if the grandparent works and the child has to be placed in a childcare or with a family friend, etc. In these cases, not only is the exosystem expanded for the child, but the microsystem is also expanded with the addition of another adult to care for the child in the absence of the grandparent.

Macrosystem

Beyond the exosystem is the macrosystem, which includes the attitudes and ideologies of culture, religion, socioeconomic status, government, mass media, etc. "The macrosystems we live in influence what, how, when, and where we carry out our relations" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 372). Garbarino (1992) noted that in a sense, the macrosystems that surround us help us to hold together the many threads of our lives. "Without an umbrella of beliefs, services, and supports for families, children and their parents are open to great harm and deterioration" (Garbarino, 1992, p. 110).

A study by Silverstein and Marenco (2001) and later echoed by Silverstein, Giarrusso, and Bengtson (2003) that sought to explore the role of grandparents in the grandchild's life

found that the grandparent role varied across personal and historical time, as well as across cultural and regional contexts. The researchers noted that cultural norms that emphasize or downplay the role of grandparents affect the type and level of grandparent involvement. These studies also revealed that grandparents have variable sets of resources and face variable sets of demands from family members, which suggests that there may exist a number of factors in the macrosystem that may influence the likelihood that a grandparent will provide childcare, such as demographic characteristics and socioeconomic resources.

A cultural influence is also revealed by studies from such researchers as Burton and Bengtson (1985), Fuller-Thomson and Minkler (2000), and Minkler and Fuller-Thomson (2005) who all were looking across demographic characteristics to determine if level of care changed across cultures. They found that a "positive cultural tradition emphasizing the grandparents' role as guardians and caregivers across the generations and current contextual problems, such as maternal incarceration, AIDS, and substance abuse, suggest a considerably higher likelihood that African-American grandparents become surrogate parents to their grandchildren" (Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2005, p. 1147). Other empirical studies (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2001; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2000; Szinovacz, 1998) suggest that although Hispanic children are less likely to be living in grandparent-headed families than African-American children, a larger proportion of Hispanic grandparent-headed families are multigenerational households than White or African-American grandparent-headed families. Fields (2003) and Tienda and Angel (1982) agreed that this was a reflection of the high value placed on intergenerational living in Hispanic culture.

Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) later added the chronosystem, which includes sociohistorical conditions and time-since-life events, which are defined as the period of time and conditions and occurrences from birth. Ford and Lerner (1992) explained in a study about integrating family therapy that the "history" of relationships in families may explain more about parent-child relations than is evident in existing dynamics. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that in many cases, families can respond to different stressors within the societal parameters existent in their lives. While events in the chronosystem may not have an immediate impact on the child, as opposed to the microsystem that is directly involved with the child, it does affect major policy and practice implications that influence kinship foster caregivers and children (Hong, Algood, Chiu, & Lee, 2011).

In fact, Hong et al. (2011) noted that an important factor that policy makers and practitioners need to consider is that kinship foster caregivers are significantly more likely to be older, have low educational attainment, live in poverty, and are more at risk of poor health than non-kinship caregivers. Another study of the grandparent-headed household demographic by Geen (2004) found that many kinship foster caregivers receive little or no support before taking children into their homes, have inadequate resources, and are at a loss in their ability to comprehend the complexities of the child welfare system. Geen (2004) argued that policy-makers and practitioners working with kinship foster caregivers and children must initiate innovative intervention strategies for providing care and support, given their age, lack of adequate resources, and health conditions. Research by Hong et al. (2011) determined that in order to address some of the many challenges that beset policy and practice in kinship foster

care, there is need for ecologically-grounded strategies that employ micro-, meso-, exo-, macro, and chronosystem levels of intervention.

A study by Walker (2011) posited that one influential factor on African-American caregiving, particularly relating to custodial and co-parenting, can be found within the chronosystem. Walker (2011) stated that the idea of an extended family support network is an African one, and that the African-American family, in respect to grandmothers, participates in the custodial and co-parenting arrangement for the benefit of their grandchildren's wellbeing. A study by Ruiz and Zhu (2004) of 99 custodial African-American grandmothers, caring for one or more grandchildren, noted that this is significant in discussing the relationships between grandchildren and grandparents because there are more single-parent households, especially among African-Americans, and this trend tends to increase more grandparent-child caregiving family arrangements. Reschke, Manoogian, Richards, Walker, and Seiling (2006) collected data from a random sampling of low-income mothers from rural communities whose mothers provided child care for their children. They reported problems that stem from grandchild caregiving in the chronosystem, such as issues with adult children, economic resources, and social interactions within the grandmothers' churches. Bronfenbrenner's (1989) advancement of the chronosystem to include the developing individual in relationship to the individual environment progressing through time included events such as the unexpected birth of grandchildren, the return of single parents to grandmothers' households, the death of grandmothers' husbands, and unexpected health stressors of grandmothers all affecting grandmothers across time. Historical time constraints were also identified in Walker's (2011) study as stressors for both the child and the grandparent and included issues such as dealing with technology upgrades, grandchildren moving from hometown areas for better opportunities in

distant cities (affecting children by having to be moved away from the current school zone to the grandparents' school zone and affecting grandparents by having the grandchildren in a distant city prior to having custody which affected the closeness of the relationships), and mandates unfamiliar to grandparents, such as car seat laws that may not have been in effect when they reared their children.

Of considerable interest to this study is the use of technology and its potential as a stressor and a possible barrier to thorough school-grandparent communication. Grandparents may not have cell phones, computers, or other technology typically used to communicate in today's society. While some schools may still use traditional methods of communication, such as parent notes and newsletters, many have embraced technology and now use text-messaging services, auto-calling programs, and e-mail to communicate with parents and caregivers, and programs like PowerSchool which require computer access and technological savvy. These methods, while efficient for those who have cell phones, computers, etc. will not effectively reach those who have not, cannot, or will not afford modern technology.

The figure below is a graphic representation of the theory:

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

This study of the primary social network of the child illustrates the complex nature of the environment and its effects on the child, as well as the child's effect on the environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) noted that even though a system was not directly linked to the development of a child, the context of the system may indirectly affect the development of the child and, likewise, the child may affect a component of another system. An example of that would be a child's influence on his/her mother's work schedule and the effect of the work schedule on the child. While the child is not directly impacted by his/her mother's employer, he/she is affected by his/her absence while he/she is at work, where he/she is taken during his/her absence, and what is occurring around him/her during his/her absence. Taking this into consideration, the ecological system of a child who is removed from home and taken to reside at his/her grandparents' home may be significantly altered, specifically in the context of the microsystem and mesosystem.

Several studies found positive effects for caregivers and children based on family and community connectedness. In a study by Messing (2005) funded by a grant to collect data through a qualitative analysis of kinship care placements, findings revealed that residing with a relative made living easier for children since relative caregivers provide continuity and connectedness for children removed from the parents. Coakley, Cuddeback, Buehler, and Cox (2007) found in a comprehensive qualitative study of kinship caregivers that relative caregivers felt that providing a home to children was rewarding in and of itself, which enhanced healthy socioemotional development and a sense of stability among children. Children also expressed that access to family members was a key to an easy transition when they were removed from their immediate family.

Other studies, however, claim that parenting behaviors and the quality of caregiver-child relationships are more likely to be negative among kinship foster homes than traditional foster homes (Chipman, Wells, & Johnson, 2002; Harden, Clyman, Kriebel, & Lyons, 2004). Chipman et al. (2002) used focus groups with both kinship families and caseworkers and found that kinship foster caregivers admitted to employing corporal punishment, and made a distinction between child maltreatment and physical punishment. The study also found that children are at great risk of re-abuse due to the increased likelihood of increased contact with abusive parents (Chipman et al., 2002). Harden et al.'s (2004) qualitative study researched parental attitudes and resources of both kinship foster caregivers (e.g., grandmothers) and traditional foster caregivers. Data revealed that kinship caregivers reported greater caregiver-child conflict and displayed less warmth than traditional foster caregivers. Iglehart (2004) also looked at numerous research articles that included an aspect of kinship care that has received relatively little research attention. She found that in reference to kinship foster care policies and practices that "it is reasonable to hypothesize that for older caregivers, the stress of childrearing with fewer resources may test their patience and tolerance and that parenting behavior and practices are influenced by broader environmental factors, such as poverty" (p. 618).

Identified Risks for Grandparents and Children

Burton and Bengtson (1985) looked at two groups of grandmothers, some very young (ages 25-38 years), and some normatively "on-time" (42-58 years).They found that family units where the grandparents are the primary caregivers are assumed to be the most vulnerable of the many different types of family units since the legacy of childrearing must reconcile a "skipped" generation (Burton & Bengtson, 1985). The grandmothers were often described as "entering a role over which they had no direct control in the time of entry" (Burton & Bengtson, 1985).

47

Jendrek (1994), Kelley (1993), and Schwartz (1994) all reported in separate studies that the family dynamics will vary based on the reason for the shift in primary care, such as family dynamics where the parent or parents are suddenly removed. Jendrek's (1994) research was based on in-depth interviews with 114 grandparents who responded to advertisements that appeared in the media, schools, and courts. Her focus was to determine what circumstances brought on the change in custodial care and what decisions the grandparents made when dealing with legal aspects of assuming primary caregiver status. She found three major categories of grandparent roles emerged from the data: custodial, living with the grandchild, and day-care roles. Jendrek (2014) found that many of the custodial grandparents face a daily dilemma of wanting the parents to be in the lives of the grandchildren, but also realize quickly that "it is not a style of grandparenting freely chosen; rather, it is a style adopted under duress" (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986, p. 234). More than 72% of custodial grandparent in the Jendrek (2014) study chose to provide a custodial relationship with the grandchildren because of the parent having emotional problems. More than 53% of grandparents did not want the child to be put into foster care, 52.8% of parents were having drug problems, and 44.1% of parents had an alcohol problem. Jendrek (2014) also noted that many grandparents used the term "neglect" when interviewed using open-ended questions instead of closed-ended questions, which revealed much more about their reasons for assuming custodial care. These grandparents typically told a story that involved a triggering event where the child was found to be in deplorable living conditions, or a phone call was made by a concerned neighbor, police, or children's services to come "get" the grandchild. The very nature of the assumption of primary caregiver in many of these cases created a stressful environment for both the grandchild and the grandparent, which may lead to many other stressors and risks for the family unit.

Kelley (1993) looked at a sample of 41 grandparents, aged 41 to 78 years, with a mean of 55 years. The subjects, according to Kelley (1993), reported increased psychological distress as measured by the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised inventory. Kelley (1993) also reported that social isolation and restriction of role, as measured by the Parenting Stress Index, were found to be predictors of increased psychological stress. Schwartz (1994) completed a comprehensive literature review that revealed that there may be additional elements in the situation that affect all of the parties: previous experiences of the children, relationships with extended family members, and supervision by social welfare agencies or courts. These three studies note that the grandparents may also be in a state of readjustment, and perhaps even grief, when the custodial change occurs.

Vygotsky (1978) noted that children need a safe, predictable base for exploration in his theory of development. However, the nature of the environment produced by a parent who is addicted to drugs or alcohol, going through a divorce, or being incarcerated chips away at the safe, predictable base needed for normal development. Additional developmental risks for the child may include moving from such an environment to another household where the primary caregiver is older; dealing with feelings of disappointment, grief, or anger towards the parent; and the consequences of having a grandparent(s) that is not prepared mentally, physically, or financially to take full responsibility for the grandchild or grandchildren.

Smith and Dannison (2003) used the "Parent Topics Questionnaire," a standardized assessment measure designed to provide parent education group facilitators with specific information about needs, desires, and expectations of participants, to find that participants in the custodial grandparent population revealed a high readiness for information, which led to a holistic program providing services to the caregiving grandparents, their young grandchildren,

49

and educational professionals. The data from the assessment also showed that children in grandparent-headed homes may be challenged in their physical, cognitive or emotional development. Additionally, Roe, Minkler, and Saunders (1995) noted that children are more likely to have been prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol, have experienced abuse and/or neglect and have difficulties forming attachments In their study, Roe et al. (1995) used a case study of grandmothers who were raising their grandchildren, which revealed that health education research, directed by policy advocacy objectives as well as more traditional research and educational aims could be used to facilitate the conversion of the private experience of raising grandchildren into a public issue of growing visibility and policy concern. Thomas, Sperry, and Yarbrough (2000) conducted an overview of research on grandparenthood in the latter decades of the 20th century. They noted that grandparents may not be fully capable of dealing with these added stresses of raising a child when they are experiencing a higher rate of depression, which translates to greater stress, poorer health, financial difficulties, and decreased family functioning (Thomas et al., 2000).

A study by Dunham et al. (1988) collected data on 54 grandmother-adolescent dyads. Using measures of the Participatory Style of Interaction (PSI), the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, the Stanford Binet, and the California Test of Basic Skills, the researchers were able to identify disorders that are common in children raised by grandparents, such as learning disabilities, insecurity, asthma and bronchitis, and dental problems. Dunham et al. (1988) also reported that the age of the child at the time of removal from the home is also a major consideration when observing developmental risks, and that children raised by grandparents develop behavioral changes and emotional problems due to the absence of the biological parents, which causes the development of stress in most. Other causes of stress, according to the study,

can be face-to-face meetings with the parents, or random phone calls, which may cause children to become upset and have mental stress, and they may also show anger more quickly, not obey grandparents, or develop guilt feelings concerning the parents.

A 2007 study by Smith and Palmieri of 733 custodial grandmothers funded by the National Institute of Mental Health on custodial grandparenting and 9,878 caregivers from the 2001 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) who completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in reference to target children between ages 4 and 17, found that custodial grandchildren are at greater risk of mental health problems than children in general, but noted that additional research was needed to determine the rates of specific diagnosable disorders experienced by custodial grandchildren, the underlying reasons for these disorders, and whether or not they vary by key sociodemographic and cultural influences. Custodial grandchildren fared worse than children from the NHIS sample across all domains measured by the SDQ subscales, regardless of the child's gender and whether reporters were recruited by population-based or convenience sampling methods (Smith & Palmieri, 2007). Comparisons within the sample of 733 custodial grandmothers showed that higher levels of difficulties were reported when grandmothers were caring for boys, were recruited by convenience versus population-based sampling, and were white.

Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994) sought to examine school performance, school behavior, behavioral problems, and/or physical health of children in kinship care. The study, along with two others the duo conducted in 1993 and another in 1994, used data collected primarily from medical records, school records, and questionnaires to relative caregivers and teachers. They found that children in kinship care had substantial health care needs, yet received inadequate health services; children had below average academic performance and cognitive skills; and had

poor study habits and low attention skills. Boys were found to have more behavioral problems than girls, mainly due to aggressiveness, and behavioral problems were more likely if the child was: male, placed because of abuse rather than neglect, or African American. Other predictors of behavioral problems included the caregiver's negative perceptions of the child, the caregiver's lower educational level, and the lack of a long-term care plan for the child. Freundlich et al. (2003) posited a similar study of African American kinship care and also determined the same risk factors were evident from the data, which they acquired through foster care records. However, they did note that the experience of siblings placed in kinship care is mutually beneficial for both children.

School-Related Risks for Children

In addition to identified issues in the family unit, there are some identified school-related risks for the child being raised by grandparents. An initial risk is a sudden transition to another school if the grandparents do not live in the same zone or town as the child's previous home. A lack of knowledge in navigating the school system plays a role in the grandparent's ability to ask for and receive help, and previous negative experiences with schools and educational personnel may further complicate interactions. According to Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994), there are significantly higher numbers of children from grandparent-headed homes with learning disabilities and/or mental impairment, and with increased numbers repeating at least one grade in school when compared to the general population. Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994) came to this conclusion after a comprehensive assessment of the school performance of children placed in the care of a relative, an arrangement termed kinship care. The educational programs, academic achievement, and cognitive and language skills of the children were assessed with a teacher questionnaire and standardized tests. Questionnaires were completed by teachers of 75% of the

374 school-age children in kinship care in one city, and additional information was obtained

from caseworkers, caregivers, and school records, according to Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994).

Of particular interest to this study is a report compiled by Smith and Dannison (2003) that found grandparents may be unaccustomed to getting one or more children out of the house in an efficient manner, may not be familiar with the best route for walking or driving a child to school, and may not be aware of buses that run in their neighborhood. The researchers looked at existing reports and research papers that identified challenges in families where custodial grandparents are interacting with school systems, which revealed that grandparents may not be aware of truancy regulations in the school system, what is expected of their grandchild at each grade level, or be able to assist the child with homework.

Park (2009) reported after a review of research articles and data collected from Northern Illinois University of DeKalb, that children raised by grandparents living in low-income neighborhoods experience a gap in pre-reading and reading achievement between the ages of 2 and 5.5 years compared to children raised in traditional families, and that this gap may also be the result of stress brought on by the family crisis that landed them in the grandparent's care.

One positive effect noted in Park's (2009) study was that adolescents raised by grandparents were reported to have little impact on their academic achievement levels in math and reading. However, they were adversely affected in their socioemotional function skills, and the function of a healthy socioemotional function was essential for allowing teens to develop into caring, non-violent individuals (Park, 2009). Physical, emotional, and behavioral problems may be more attributable to factors such as feelings of abandonment or prior instances of abuse before entering the grandparents' care, according to Park (2009).

Chronic Early Absence and Academic Performance

Adding to the many school-related risks for children being raised by grandparents may be the possibility of chronic early absence. Chang and Romero (2008) published an executive summary report concerning chronic absence in the early grades. "The applied research project, supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, sought to explore the prevalence, consequences, and potential contributing factors and possible responses to chronic absence in grades K-3" (Chang & Romero, 2008, p. 2). National and local data were re-analyzed, relevant literature was reviewed, and interviews with practitioners, researchers, and funders about promising practices and programs were conducted. International data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study and Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) were analyzed by The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) to assess impact, prevalence and risk factors for chronic early absence. Additionally, staff from Annie E. Casey Foundation and consultants worked with the Urban Institute, the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, the National Center for School Engagement, and Metis Associates to examine early absenteeism patterns in nine, mostly urban, localities by grade and for particular populations. Chang and Romero (2008) clarified chronic early absence as missing 10% or more of a school year and identified three major issues of chronic early absence: chronic absence adversely impacts student performance; chronic absence is often overlooked; and chronic absence is influenced by a variety of factors. They found that this was particularly true for children living in poverty, but also that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, did worse academically in first grade if they were chronically absent in kindergarten (Chang & Romero, 2008).

The methods by which a school system takes daily attendance may contribute to the extent to which chronic early absence is not easily identified as a problem and may be

overlooked. Schools typically only monitor average daily attendance or unexcused absences, a status that young children may not receive because it is assumed by administration that they are not likely to be home without the knowledge of an adult (Chang & Romero, 2008).

The third issue identified by Chang and Romero (2008) is that chronic absence is influenced by a variety of factors. While the school contributes to the problem of chronic absence by not monitoring attendance and failing to communicate the importance of regular attendance to parents, chronic absence may be higher in families that do not understand the importance of regular attendance, are highly mobile, face multiple risk factors, or who are poor and lack basic resources (Chang & Romero, 2008). Also worth mentioning from the report is that communities may contribute to chronic absence as a result of lack of formal and informal services and supports, high levels of violence or inadequate provisions for helping families and children transition into formal education.

There were several questions asked in the Chang and Romero (2008) research that crossed over into the identified school-related and developmental risk factors for children, which led to this literature review and subsequent research questions. The questions were:

Is chronic early absence an indication that families are:

(1) unaware of the adverse impact of chronic early absence and have not yet developed routines that promote consistent school attendance?

(2) poor and lack the resources (transportation, food, clothing, social supports, etc.) to ensure their children regularly attend school?

(3) highly mobile?

(4) having difficulty addressing and managing illness, especially chronic disease?

(5) having a history of negative experiences with education and may not feel welcome in schools?

(6) facing multiple risks (for example, living in poverty, teen motherhood, single motherhood, low maternal education, welfare, unemployment, food insecurity, poor maternal health and multiple siblings)? and

(7) dealing with serious problems (for instance, mental illness, homelessness, child or domestic abuse, incarceration of a parent, etc.), that make school attendance difficult because family life has been disrupted and public agencies and schools lack a coordinated response? (Chang and Romero (2008).

It is important to note that none of these questions address non-parental custodial care or the existence of custodial grandparents, even though many of the same issues are relevant and reported in other research as indicators of developmental and school-related risks.

Recognition of Population

There are many studies on families and their interactions with schools, which often focus on mainstream family units and their participation in school activities. Cardona, Jain, and Canfield-Davis published a study in 2012 that reviewed the home-school relationships through a qualitative study based on Bronfenbrenner's (1995) ecological framework with nine members from six families who had children enrolled in three early childhood care and education programs. In-depth interviews were used to find that the way families understand parent involvement is strongly influenced by issues of ethnicity, social class, level of education, and language. Researchers found that the way families understand parent involvement is strongly influenced by issues of ethnicity, level of education, and language. The data showed that school counselors have a critical role to play in shaping young children's lives and community around

them (Cardona et al. 2012). The researchers recommended that it is important to develop an ecological definition of family involvement that encompasses issues of social structures and privilege within home-based and school-based activities as well as home-school relationships. Lawson (2003) reported after conducting semistructured ethnographic interviews with 12 teachers and 13 parents that both parents and teachers have used a school-based definition of traditional family units (two parents in the household), which may not be the same as diverse families' definitions or perceptions of family involvement. To complicate the issue, much of the research defines the "diverse families" and the school relationship as parent-teacher encounters, minority and cultural demographics, and does not include any grandparent-led households. In a state-wide inquiry of school systems conducted in 2013, Tennessee reported that the data available for research purposes did not include families characterized as grandparent-led households and that only one school system in the state reported data with the grandparents designated as head-of-household. Data is entered into the statewide system with grandparents entered into the "parent" section instead of the "other" section, which makes segregation of family types difficult for research purposes.

Communication and Relationships

Research has determined that communication plays a critical role in helping families and professionals coordinate the shared responsibility of children's wellbeing (ASCA, 2005; Education Trust, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1995) ecological framework, communication is indispensable between the various settings in which children develop. Bryk and Schneider (2002) provide the construct of relational trust, defined as "discernment of the intention of others-that is the interpretation one person makes of another's behavior" (p. 21) based on the daily interactions among people involved with a common purpose such as

57

children's wellbeing, as a framework to understand the day-to-day social interactions between professionals and families.

A growing body of research indicates family involvement with schools results in mutually beneficial outcomes (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004; Connors & Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2001). Further, Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, and Walberg (2005) documented that young children's potential to excel depends on the environment in which they learn and the interconnections they develop within these settings. The environment must be constructed using developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), a term coined by Copple and Bredekamp (2009), as "a perspective within early childhood education whereby a teacher or child caregiver nurtures a child's social/emotional, physical, and cognitive development by basing all practices and decisions on (1) theories of child development, (2) individually identified strengths and weaknesses of each child uncovered through authentic assessment, and (3) the child's cultural background as defined by his community, family history, and family structure" (p.10). Copple and Bredekamp (2009) are considered the foremost authorities on developmentally appropriate practices by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the leading advocate organization for early childhood practices. Both Copple and Bredekamp are responsible for a number of major NAEYC position statements and publications including those on developmentally appropriate practice, curriculum and assessment, literacy, and accreditation.

DAP is important to consider because according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2010):

Developmentally appropriate practices occur within a context that supports the development of relationships between adults and children, among children, among

58

teachers, and between teachers and families. Such a community reflects what is known

about the social construction of knowledge and the importance of establishing a caring,

inclusive community in which all children can develop and learn. (para. 5)

For the purpose of this study, the recognition of DAP is crucial to determining if the family unit

that includes the grandparent as the primary caregiver has developed relationships among

teachers, community members, and above all, the grandchildren, where mutually beneficial

outcomes occur.

Summary

This review of literature supports that regardless of the reason, any child who is removed

from his/her home and parents is at great risk for developmental and school-related issues and

disturbances. Grandparents are also at greater risk for health and emotional problems, which

seem to worsen with the assumption of parental duties. Economic factors and social stresses only

add to the problems. Research shows that the education field has consistently failed to identify

this population as either a growing one, or one that may need additional resources and supports

to improve student education and attendance. Delivery of information has moved from

traditional methods (notes, phone calls) to more technology-driven methods, such as e-mail and

text messages, which may not be an effective way to communicate with grandparent-led

families.

Even though many of the questions posed by Chang and Romero (2008) intertwine with

identified developmental and school-related risks for children being raised by grandparents, it is

not clear that there is a correlation between chronic early absence and children being raised by

grandparents. While there is a plethora of research that supports the theory that grandparent-led

households are an at-risk population, there are not studies that prove or strongly suggest that

grandparents need additional support to prevent chronic early absence. Additionally, although this study has exhausted the literature relevant to the subject, very little information is available concerning the delivery of information to this population, which, if not successful, may contribute to chronic early absence, as well as other identified risk factors for this population. A need exists for continuing research on the relationship between grandparent-led families and delivery of services, support, information, and student outcomes to determine if this population would benefit from specialized services to deter chronic early absence and support family-school communications.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

This study sought to examine the current methods of delivery of services, support, and information to grandparent-led households with students in grades pre-k through third grade in a county in Northeast Tennessee, determine if there was evidence to support the need for additional support and/or intervention for this population based on pre-determined at-risk factors, and conclude if improved communication, services, and support will potentially decrease chronic early absence. Previous research identified risk factors in both school and home settings for students raised in a grandparent-led household which may have impacted student academic achievement (Brown & De Toledo, 1995; Butler & Zakari, 2005; Brown-Standridge & Floyd, 2000; Emick & Hayslip, 1999; Hayslip, Shore, Henderson & Lambert, 1998), but there was little to no existing research that explored potential risk factors in grandparent-led households that may have contributed to chronic early absence. Researcher-developed interviews with grandparents and school personnel established what methods of delivery of information, services, and supports were utilized, if the grandparent or grandparents were aware of resources available to them in the system, what the grandparent or grandparents perception and beliefs may have been concerning the education of the grandchild and determine what, if any, alterations to the current methods of delivery and services offered needed to be made by the school system to decrease the occurrence of chronic early absence.

Rationale for Mixed Methods

This study used a mixed methods design in an effort to acquire a wholistic view of the study groups. Creswell (2009) noted that the reason mixed methods are necessary is that the

61

problems faced in research are increasingly complex and approaching them via a single methodological tool set may not be the best way to find satisfying answers. Both qualitative and quantitative data were utilized to determine the socio-economic status of the families, the circumstances from which a change in custody occurred, school attendance rates; opinions and preferences of delivery of information from grandparents and school personnel, and several other pieces of data the researcher used to determine the views, feelings, and meaning of specific ideas from the participants rather than the views, feelings, and meaning of specific ideas brought in by the researcher (Creswell, 2009).This method also allows for a strong triangulation of data, which reinforces both the collected qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2009).

Rational for Qualitative Inquiry. Creswell (2009) explains that qualitative inquiry employs different philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. A qualitative design was chosen for this study based on specific characteristics Creswell (2009) defines and are listed as follows:

- Research is often conducted in the field, allowing direct interaction with the people being studied in their context;

- Researchers collect data themselves by examining documents, observing behavior or interviewing participants;

- Multiple sources of data are preferred over a single source; this requires the researcher to review all data, make sense of it and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all sources;

- Researchers often build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up (inductive analysis);

- The focus is on learning the meaning participants hold rather than the meaning brought in by the researcher;

- The research is often an emergent, shifting process in response to the field;

- The qualitative researcher interprets what is seen, heard and understood. This must be seen in light of the researcher's background, history, context and prior understanding;

- The researcher tries to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue by reporting multiple perspectives and identifying multiple factors involved (Creswell, 2009).

A qualitative approach typically provides a more comprehensive and deep investigation of the human condition than quantitative methods (Creswell, 2009). Based on these characteristics, this study did, as recommended by Creswell (2009), include multiple sources of data, used inductive data analysis, focused on participants/ meanings, included interpretative inquiry, and attempted to develop a holistic account of each participant's experience. This method can also be classified as the Glaserian approach, which includes the use of all data (e.g., survey data and other quantitative data), not just qualitative data (e.g., interviews) (Garson, 2012). The Glaserian approach, according to Garson (2012), takes a more social scientific approach, emphasizing a unified "coding paradigm" developed by the researcher and applied systematically to the study of causal relationships.

Rationale for Quantitative Inquiry. Creswell (2009) noted that two main strategies exist for quantitative design-survey research and experimental research. For the purpose of this study, survey research and a county-wide database was utilized to provide a numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the study population. While the primary purpose of utilizing quantitative data is the intent to generalize from a sample to a population (Babble, 1990), the sample in this study is not large enough for the outcomes to be generalized to a larger population.

63

The researcher's intent was not to generalize outcomes to a larger population, but to prompt future in-depth studies of subjects, patterns, or outcomes that were unexpected.

Goals of Study

The specific goals of this research were to: 1) examine and identify the level and delivery of information, services, and support offered to grandparents who have become the primary caregivers of pre-k through third grade students; 2) collect data from participating grandparents, staff, and family resource agencies through the use of researcher-developed interviews and; 3) determine if the information and services were perceived as effective related to the occurrence of chronic early absence. The objectives included: 1) investigating grandparents' actual needs as compared to school-perceived needs; 2) identifying services and information that matched the actual needs and/or perceived needs of the grandparents; 3) investigated what actual services are offered in the school system to support grandparents raising grandchildren; 4) investigated if the actual offered services and information were a) deemed helpful by the grandparents, and b) were related to a decrease in the occurrence of chronic early absence; and 5) identify if there were substantial differences between the group of grandparents with children who have chronic early absence and the group of grandparents of children with the best attendance records.

<div align="center">

Research Questions

</div>

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

Overarching Question

Does the school system communicate the importance of attendance to grandparents who are raising grandchildren?

Sub-Question #1. *What types of information are communicated to custodial grandparents regarding the education of their grandchildren?*

1a.*Is the importance of school attendance communicated to custodial grandparents? If so, how?*

1b. *Are there differences in views on the importance of attendance between custodial grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?*

Sub-Question #2.*What methods of communication do the school system use with custodial grandparents, and what methods of communication are preferred by custodial grandparents?*

2a.*What differences are there between the communication methods used by the school system with grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?*

2b.*What differences are there between the communication methods preferred by grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?*

Sub-Question #3.*What services and information do the custodial grandparents deem as most important to their ability to support the education of their grandchildren?*

3a.*What differences are there between the services and information deemed as most important by grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?*

Sub-Question #4.*What do elementary school counselors, the director of the Family Resource Center, and the assistant director of the Family Resource Center think are the most needed services and most effective methods of communication concerning the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren?*

4a.*Are there differences between the views of school staff/personnel and custodial grandparents related to perceived needs, services, and information?*

Participants

Participants for this study included 5 custodial/caregiver grandparent(s) of students in grades pre-k through grade three enrolled in any of the 17 schools in a rural East Tennessee school system whose grandchildren's attendance met or exceeded the 10% absence rate as defined by Chang and Romero (2008) as chronic early absence; 4 grandparents whose grandchildren's attendance did not meet the criteria for chronic early absence and were in the top 5% of attendance rates; and staff/personnel from the same school system that included three elementary teachers, the director of the Family Resource Center, and the assistant director of the Family Resource Center.

A report generated by the Skyward Data Base System identified all of the population in the school system that met the aforementioned criteria. The total number of grandparents raising grandchildren in grades pre-k through 3rd was identified, and the absence rates for each of these grandchildren were reported. From the group of grandparents who had grandchildren who meet the criteria for chronic early absence (10% or more absence rate) a subsample of 5 grandparents were chosen using the extreme case selection (Creswell, 2013). Additionally from the group of grandparents who had grandchildren whose attendance rates were in the top 5% for the school system (as a whole) a comparison subsample of 4 grandparents were chosen using the extreme case selection method (Creswell, 2013). The initial plan was to include five elementary school counselors, but none of the counselors contacted agreed to participate. Therefore, three elementary teachers were recruited to complete questionnaires and brief interviews, as well as the Family Resource Center staff.

Instrumentation

A total of three instruments were be used for data collection in this study: 1) researcher –

developed interview of grandparents with grandchildren who have the highest rate of chronic

early absence (see Appendix A); 2) researcher-developed interview of grandparents whose

grandchildren have the highest attendance rates (see Appendix B); 3) researcher-developed

interview of school personnel (see Appendix C). The grandparent interviews were based on an

extensive literature review related to the identified needs of custodial grandparents who have

participated in other studies, such as Burton and Bengtson (1985), Brown and De Toledo (1995),

Brown-Standridge and Floyd (2000), and Davidhizar, Bechtel, and Woodring (2000). The

researcher-developed interview for school personnel investigated what services and methods of

information delivery were used system-wide. The researcher-developed interview questions were

based on extensive research from studies including those by Parker and Asher (1987), Walker et

al. (1995), and Bronfenbrenner (1977) to help determine what actual needs, services, and

delivery of information methods the grandparents believed they needed to help their students be

academically successful and to determine if there were differences in the grandparent group with

grandchildren meeting the criteria of chronic early absence and the grandparent group with

grandchildren who had the highest level of attendance.

<div align="center">Research Setting</div>

The setting for the Family Resource Center data collection was a multi-office modular

building located centrally in a rural East Tennessee town that was convenient to all 17 schools in

the district and was the only physical location used in the study. Grandparent interviews were to

be conducted in person at the grandparent's home, or in the researcher's office, but due to

weather restrictions during the data collection phase, brief phone interviews and mailed questionnaires were utilized.

The county school district is located in the Tri-Cities region of Northeast Tennessee with a community population of approximately 56,587. The 2012 U.S. Department of Commerce Census reported the county's racial composition as 96.7% Caucasian, 1.4% African American, and 1.3% Hispanic or Latino. The county district serves approximately 2,621 elementary students with 64.1% receiving free or reduced lunch (New America, 2013).

Data Collection Procedures

Data from the software program Skyward was filtered to produce only those groups that met the criteria of "grandparents as primary caregivers." This data group was then divided into students who met the criteria of "chronic early absence," which is missing 10% or more of school year (Chang & Romero, 2008) and students who had the highest attendance (top 5% of attendance rates for the school system). Potential participants for each group of grandparents were placed on a numbered list with the family having the highest absences and highest attendance rates in the first spot and so on. The top five in each group were chosen to be interviewed.

From the group of grandparents who had grandchildren who meet the criteria for chronic early absence (10% or more absence rate) a subsample of 5 grandparents were chosen based on the aforementioned method. Additionally, from the group of grandparents who had grandchildren whose attendance rates were in the top 5% for the school system (as a whole) a comparison subsample of 4 grandparents were chosen using the aforementioned method. Three elementary teachers and both Family Resource Center administration personnel also participated, for a total of 5 school personnel/administration.

The grandparents were contacted via phone to discuss the time frame and procedures of the study. They were asked during the phone call if they wished to participate. The researcher continued down the list until a total of five grandparents in the group with chronic early absence agreed to participate and four in the group with high attendance agreed. The researcher was unable to recruit a fifth family from the group with high attendance due to time constraints and the inability to participate of those contacted. The grandparent and school staff interviews were to be audio-recorded and transcribed, but due to weather constraints, questionnaires were mailed to the participants and interviews were completed over the phone. Grandparents signed an informed consent form (see Appendix D) in the mailed packet and sent it back.

The two staff members of The Family Resource Center were interviewed via email questionnaire and briefly in person at The Family Resource Center. They signed an informed consent form (see Appendix E) at the time of the interview. The three elementary teachers were also interviewed via questionnaire sent by email.

<div align="center">

Measures

</div>

Two researcher-created, open-ended interviews (see Appendices A and B) were used to gather data from the grandparents. The interview for custodial grandparents of children with chronic early absence consisted of 18 open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The interview for custodial grandparents of children with high attendance rates consisted of 17 open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The two interviews were almost identical except for 3 questions (2 in the chronic early absence group, 1 in the high attendance group) that were specific to the group of grandparents surveyed. Data collected from the grandparents was used to determine a list of services (including support services), delivery of information from school to home, and other identified areas that the grandparents perceived to be needed in the school system. The data

also included what services they were aware of to support their family as well as demographic information and their views on chronic early absence.

The data from the staff members of The Family Resource Center and the elementary school teachers was collected using a researcher-created open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questionnaire consisted of 7 open-ended questions. The data was used to compile a list of services available in the school system and community to support at-risk families, such as grandparent-led households. The data was also used to reveal the staff members' perceptions of identified needs that grandparent-led households may have as well as staff members' views on chronic early absence, and delivery methods for information This data was cross-referenced with the data gleaned from the grandparent interviews to determine if the needs of the grandparents matched the perceived needs of school personnel.

Skyward Database. Skyward Database is a prek-12 and municipality management software that promotes increased efficiency and reduces costs for school systems, according to Skyward, Inc. (2014). The school system in this study adopted this software package at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year and was the only source of quantitative data available at the time research began on this study in 2013. Data clerks input daily data into the system, which includes attendance, disciplinary actions, guardian information, socio-economic information, etc. Data collection for this study began in August 2013-2014 and the school year 2012-2013 was the only complete data set available, as the school system had switched to Skyward from another software management product and did not have access to manipulate prior data. For that reason, the researcher used the quantitative data from the 2012-2013 school year for the purposes of this study.

Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2009) notes validity in qualitative research refers to the certainty and accuracy of the findings and is supported by evidence. This researcher attempted to ensure validity during the course of the research by identifying and addressing all possible factors that may threaten reliability and by sharing information with the participants throughout the data analysis process (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, three early childhood professors examined all the questionnaires and made suggestions/added questions in order to improve content validity.

Reliability is also addressed by Creswell (2009) and refers to the repeatability of a particular group of research findings; that is, how accurately findings would replicate in an identical work of research. To aid in reliability, the methods of data collection used for this research included multiple brief interviews from a variety of groups (grandparents, school personnel) impacted by this topic (chronic early absence). The dissertation chair also coded all the grandparent questionnaire data and school personnel data. Any disagreement in coding between the chair and the primary researcher were discussed, and changes were made to ensure 100% agreement between coders. The researcher also implemented debriefing sessions with the researcher's dissertation chair to discuss alternative approaches, to reflect, and to develop ideas.

Background of Researcher

The researcher has worked at the Hawkins County School System as director of early childhood programs for 16 years. The researcher holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Carson-Newman College in Business Management and Marketing, a Master's in Education in Special Education with emphasis on Early Childhood from East Tennessee State University, an Education Specialist degree in School Leadership from Lincoln Memorial University, and is licensed in the state of Tennessee to teach pre-k through third grades as well as hold supervisory

positions within the school system. This study was conducted as part of the requirements for completion of a Doctor of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education. The researcher is interested in the population of students being raised by grandparents because each year, there are more and more of these families coming into the pre-k program, which have altered many of the ways activities, information, and services are delivered. The researcher is a parent but is not herself a grandparent at this time.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology, data collection procedures and instrumentation. Chapter 4 outlines the study findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Purpose of Study

Mixed-method, primarily qualitative case studies, such as this one, can yield valuable and descriptive information about a topic of interest which involves the real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009), and involves multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, photographs, documents, and reports) (Creswell, 2013). The participants in this study were chosen using a criterion sampling method, which is defined by Creswell (2013) as a group chosen when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon. For this study, two criterion-based groups were chosen using data from Skyward database, questionnaires, brief phone interviews, and school-level records. Data was analyzed in order to develop themes to explore the topic of chronic early absence of children in grandparent-led households. Creswell (2013) recommends identifying five to seven general themes that are used to write the final narrative.   The data and analysis provided an initial look at the perceptions of grandparents raising grandchildren and their perceived needs relative to their grandchildren's education, as well as teachers' and family resource center personnel's perceived needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. Chapter 4 reveals the results of data analysis and study findings.

Preliminary Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the level and delivery of information and services offered to grandparents who have become the primary caregivers of pre-k through third grade students and determine if the information and services are perceived as effective, and if they impact chronic early absence (missing 10% or more of the school year) as defined by Chang

73

and Romero (2008). This case study focused on the perceived needs of grandparents who are placed in the parent role once again by accepting custody, adopting, or other descriptor that granted primary caregiver status to the grandparent or grandparents and examined if the school system is meeting their needs, through delivery of information and services, regarding their grandchildren's education.

The researcher began preliminary analysis by collecting Skyward data on all students registered for pre-k through 3rd grade during the 2012-2013 school year. The data was then segregated using a criterion method of sampling, which was based on the status of grandparent-led households and parent/other guardian-led households. The breakdown of the data is represented in Figure 2 below. This data revealed that a total of 2,687 families in pre-k through 3rd grade were being served in 2012-2013, and that 81 of the families qualified as grandparent-led households, which is 3.11% of the total population.

Segregation of Grandparent-Led Households from Total Population

Grandparent-led Households n=81
3%

Parent/Other Guardian n=2606
97%

■ Parent/Other Guardian n=2606

■ Grandparent-led Households
n=81
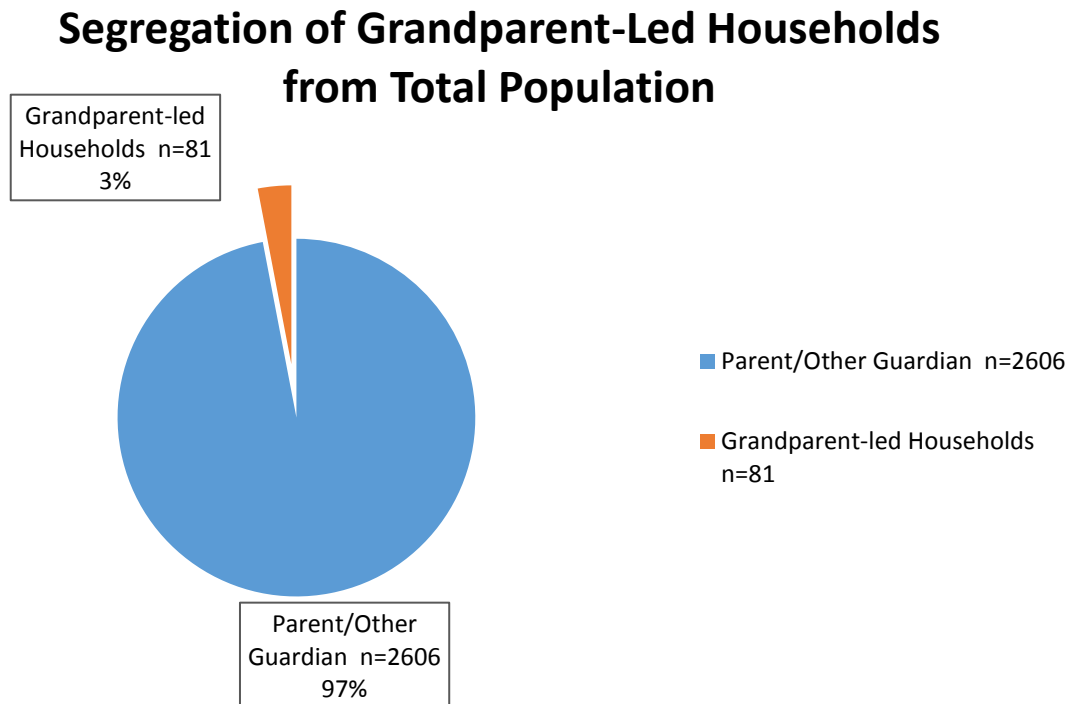
Figure 2.Segregation of Grandparent-Led Households from Total Population

Groupings of Families in the Study Groups

Grandparent-Led Families with Grandchildren Who Have Chronic Early Absence

The 5 grandparent-led families with grandchildren who have chronic early absence were chosen based on the highest number of absences in the entire pre-k through 3rd grade population. The list was arranged in order from highest number of absences to least number of absences. This method of extreme case selection (Creswell, 2013) was chosen because it typically produces a richer, more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and lends credibility to one's research account. It is typically used in conjunction with another method, such as the criterion method used in this study. The researcher started at the top of the list (most absences) and contacted each family by phone to gain their permission to participate. Two of the top five did not have time to participate, so the researcher continued down the list until a total of 5 families agreed to participate. The final list includes the first, second, and third highest absenteeism rates, and the seventh and eighth highest on the list. A breakdown of each family is provided so that the reader will have a holistic view of the population being studied. Some information is from the Skyward Database, and some of the data is from the grandparent questionnaires and brief phone interviews. All names have been changed for confidentiality.

> **Grandparent 1.** Angie is a 48-year-old single grandmother who is currently raising her granddaughter, Amy, who was in kindergarten in 2012-2013. Angie is disabled, injured from an accident at the manufacturing plant where she was working 4 years ago as a full-time employee. Angie has a high school diploma, both she and Amy are Caucasian, and she pays full price for school lunches. Neither of Amy's parents is involved in her life or education. Amy was removed from the mother's custody when she was 2 years old

because of drug use, and the court removed custodial rights from the father because he was in jail at the time of the hearing and had not been involved in Amy's life since birth.

Grandparent 2. Betty is a 52-year-old single grandmother who is currently raising her granddaughter Brittany, who was in second grade in 2012-2013. Betty has a high school diploma, does not work outside the home, pays full price for school lunches, and both she and Brittany are Caucasian. Neither of Brittany's parents is involved in her life or education. Brittany was removed from the parents' custody due to neglect stemming from drug use. Betty has had legal custody since Brittany was an infant.

Grandparent 3. Chelsey is a 54-year-old single grandmother raising her grandson, Chris, who was in first grade in 2012-2013. Chelsey is disabled and attended high school through her junior year when she dropped out. Both Chelsey and Chris are Caucasian. Chris receives free school lunches, and his parents are involved "not much" in his life or education, according to Chelsey. Chris was "basically given" to Chelsey when he was three years old because he has special needs, and the parents "did not know what to do with him." Chelsey has since learned that he is autistic and struggles with social environments. His parents visit and call from time to time but are not involved with decisions concerning his life or education.

Grandparent 4. Donna and David are the grandparents of Danielle, and Donna provided all of the information for the study concerning her family. Donna is 51, and David is 54, and they are the only 2-grandparent-led household in the group with chronic early absence. Donna does not work, but David works at a manufacturing plant. Both have their high school diploma. Danielle was in pre-k during the 2012-2013 school year. All members of this family are Caucasian, they pay full price for school lunches, and

Danielle's parents are not involved in her life or education. Donna reported that Danielle was taken from her birth parents due to neglect and abuse. Danielle was an infant when Donna and David gained custody. Neither parent is allowed to see Danielle due to circumstances surrounding the shift in custody.

Grandparent 5. Earl is the 54-year-old grandfather of Erin. Earl works part-time at a gas station, has his high school diploma, and pays full price for Erin's meals at school. Erin was in first grade in the 2012-2013 school year. Both Earl and Erin are Caucasian, and Erin's parents are not involved in her life or education. Earl has had custody of Erin since Erin was around one year old. Earl's son and his girlfriend were "partiers," and they basically left Erin with Earl one weekend and never came back. Earl received custody of Erin with no protest from her parents. At the time, Earl was married but has since lost his wife to cancer.

Additional data from questionnaires completed by this group of five grandparent-led families with chronic early absence will be examined later in the analysis.

Grandparent-Led Families with Grandchildren Who Have High Attendance Rates

The four grandparent-led families with grandchildren who have high attendance rates were chosen based on the highest number of days of attendance in the entire pre-k through 3rd grade population. The list was arranged in order from highest number of days of attendance to least number of days of attendance, following the same procedure as that used with the chronic early absence group of grandparents. The researcher started at the top of the list (highest attendance days) and contacted each family by phone to gain their permission to participate. One family member did not return the phone call, so the next person on the list was contacted until four agreed to participate. The final list includes the first, second, fourth and fifth families with

highest attendance days. The researcher attempted to recruit one more but was unsuccessful. A

breakdown of each family is provided so that the reader will have a holistic view of the

population being studied. Some information is from the Skyward Database, and some of the data

is from the grandparent questionnaires and brief phone interviews. All names have been changed

for confidentiality.

Grandparent 1. Francis is the 54-year-old Caucasian grandmother of Frank, who was in

third grade in 2012-2013. Francis works part time as a clerk in a convenience store, and

both grandparents are in the home. Francis has a high school diploma, pays full price for

Frank's school meals, and neither of Frank's parents are involved in his life or education.

Francis received custody of Frank when Frank was in kindergarten. His parents were

divorcing and "basically gave (Frank) to us." Francis reported that Frank's parents were

good people but very immature.

Grandparent 2. Gloria is the 48-year-old grandmother of Greta. Greta was in first grade

in 2012-2013. Both grandparents are in the home, Greta receives free lunch benefits from

school, and both of her parents are involved in her life and education. Gloria works full

time at a local grocery story bakery, has a high school diploma, and is Caucasian. Gloria

received custody of Greta when she was an infant. Both of Greta's parents were teenagers

when Greta was born, and Gloria was willing to raise Greta while the parents finished

high school. During the time between the questionnaire and the brief phone interview,

Greta's mother was released from jail. She now lives in the same house, with Gloria, her

husband, and Greta living upstairs, and Greta's mother living downstairs. Gloria

explained that she is basically the mother to Greta, and Greta's parents are more like

siblings because they do not take on the parenting role, but the mother will babysit while Gloria works.

Grandparent 3. Helen is the 51-year-old Caucasian grandmother of Hank, who was in first grade in 2012-2013. Both grandparents are in the home; Helen works full time at a car manufacturing plant, has some college education, and pays reduced prices for Hank's meals in school. Helen noted that Hank's parents were not involved much in his life and education. Helen received emergency custody of Hank when a neighbor called the Department of Children's Services on Hank's parents when he was an infant. Hank was removed from the home due to neglect and placed with Helen and her husband. She was able to gain custody when Hank's parents were jailed for drugs. The parents are still in jail and continue to call and check on Hank at least a few times each month, according to Helen. She does not take him to visit his parents in jail, however, and he does not refer to his biological parents as "Mom" or "Dad".

Grandparent 4. Jane is the 59-year-old grandmother of John, who was in second grade in 2012-2013. Both are Caucasian, both grandparents are in the home, and they pay full price for John's meals at school. Jane does not work outside the home, has a high school education, and both parents are involved in John's life and education. Jane received custody of John when he was an infant. Both of his parents were in the army and were stationed out of state. Because both parents are career military, Jane and her husband agreed to take responsibility of John because "he needed a stable life." While both of his parents are still in the army, they speak to John daily and are consulted about his education, health, etc. John is taken by his grandparents to visit his parents who live out of state at least once every couple of months and sometimes more often as time allows.

A breakdown comparison of age (Figure 3), a statistical analysis of ages (Figure 4), events that led to change in custody (Figure 5), and a comparison of percentages of grandparent-led households and parent/other guardian households that meet the criteria of CEA (Figure 6) is provided below. Additional data from questionnaires completed by this group of four grandparent-led families with high attendance rates will be examined later in the analysis.

Comparison of Ages of Grandparents
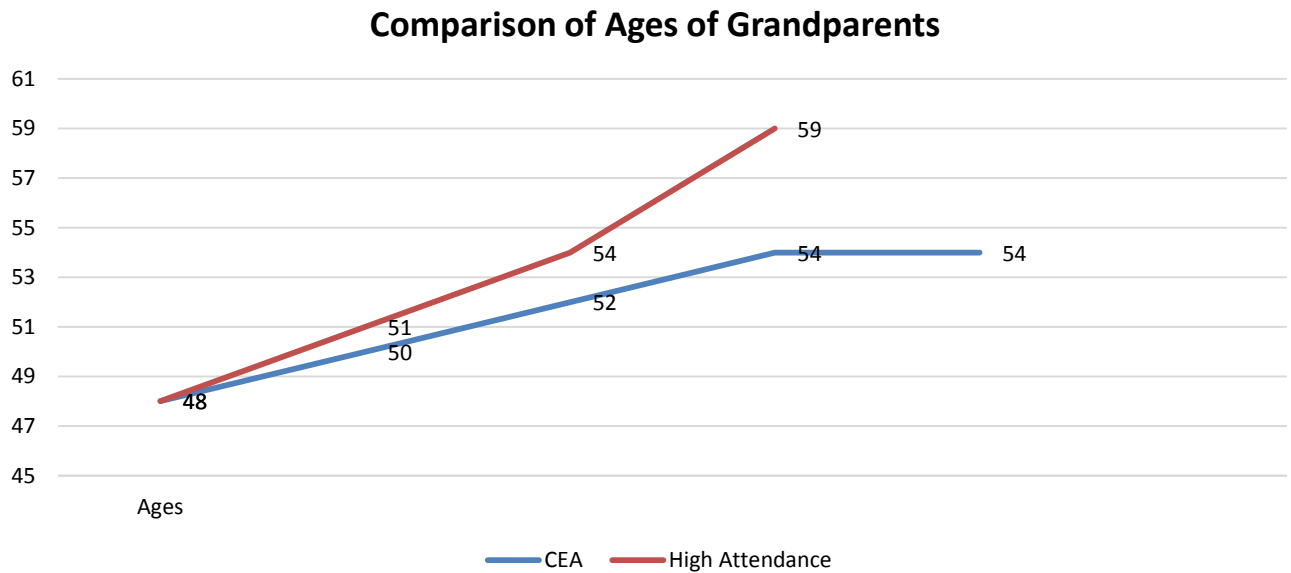
Figure 3. Comparison of Ages of Grandparents

Statistical Analysis of Ages
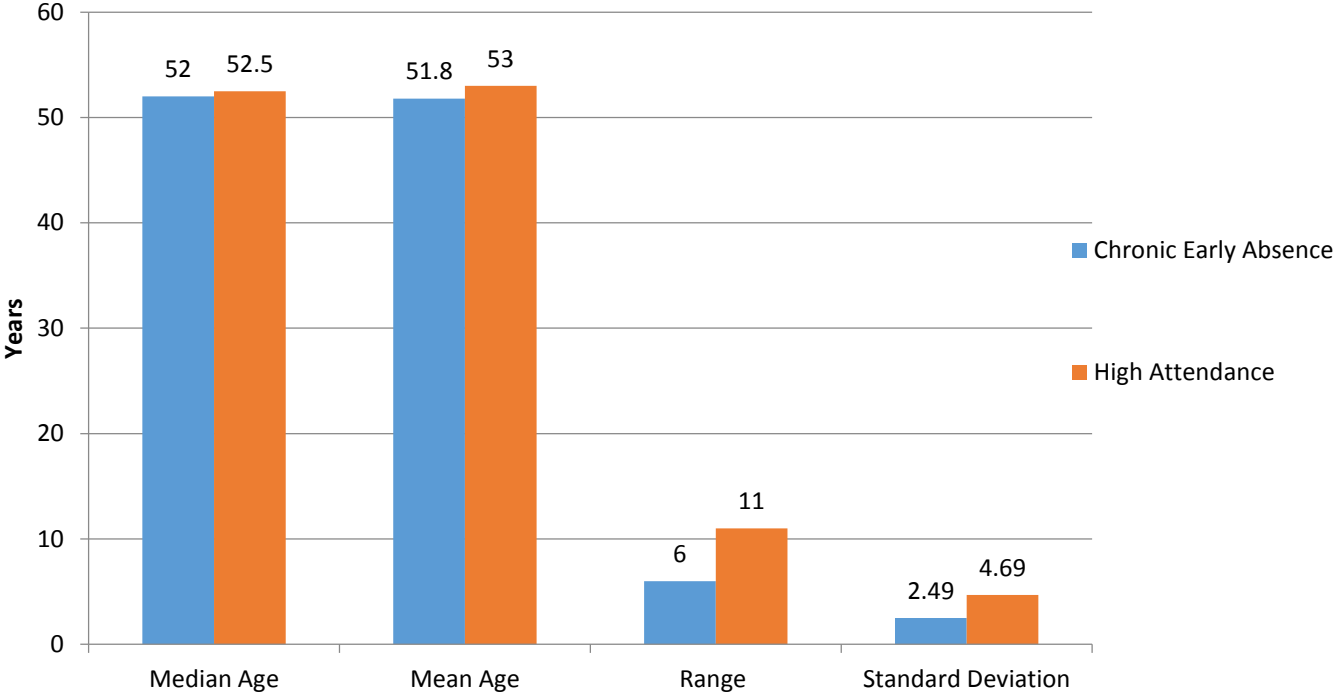
Figure 4. Statistical Analysis of Ages

Events that Led to Change of Custody in Grandparent-Led Household with Chronic Early Absence
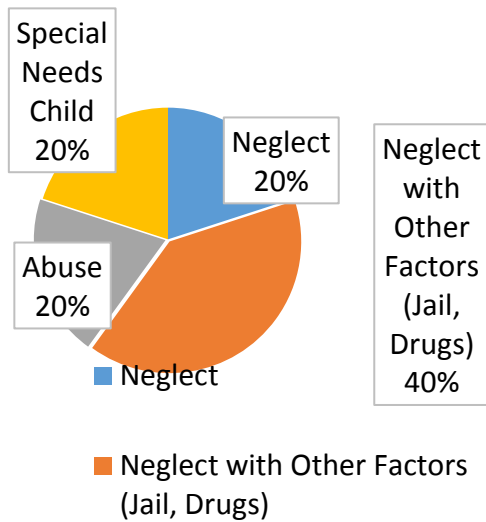
Events that Led to Change in Grandparent-Led Household with High Attendance Rates

Special Needs Child 20%

Neglect 20%

Neglect with Other Factors (Jail, Drugs) 40%

Abuse 20%

■ Neglect

■ Neglect with Other Factors (Jail, Drugs)

Parents in Military 25%

Abandoned Due to Divorce 25%

Teen Parents 25%

Neglect with Other Factors (Jail, Drugs) 25%

■ Abandoned Due to Divorce

■ Neglect with Other Factors (Jail, Drugs)

■ Teen Parents

■ Parents in Military
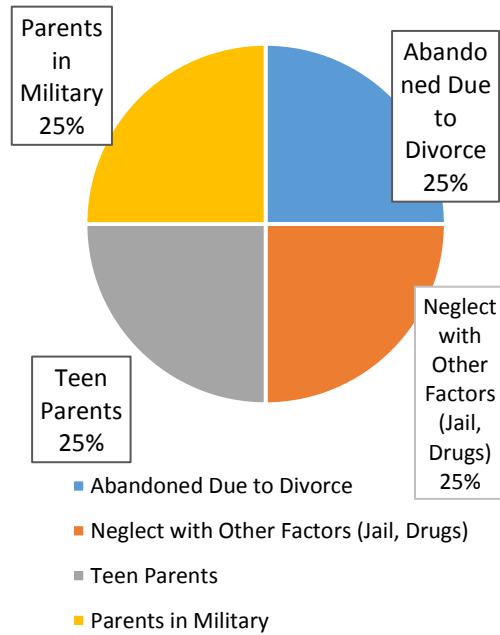
Figure 5. Comparison of Events that Led to Change of Custody

Parent/Other Guardian-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence

Once segregated, the researcher also determined the number of parent/other guardian-led households that had students who met the definition of chronic early absence (10% or more missed school days). In this group, 461 students met or exceeded 10% of missed school days, which is 18% of the total population of parent/guardian-led households. The researcher also determined the number of grandparent-led households that had students who met the definition of chronic early absence. In this group, 38 students met or exceeded 10% of missed school days, which is 46.91% of the total population of grandparent-led households. This indicates that chronic early absence is indeed a bigger problem for grandparent-led households, which suggests that this may be a vulnerable population, as hypothesized. Figure 6 represents a comparison of

attendance rates for grandparent-led households vs. parent/other guardian-led households.
Figure 7 represents a comparison of the mean, median, and mode days missed of both
grandparent-led households and parent/guardian-led households whose grandchildren had
chronic early absence as defined by Chang and Romero (2008).

Percentage in Grandparent Group that Meets CEA Criteria

Does not meet CEA (n=43) 53%

Meets CEA (n=38) 47%

■ Meets CEA (n=38) ■ Does not meet CEA (n=43)

Percentage in Parent/Other Guardian Group that Meets CEA Criteria

Meets CEA (n=461) 18%

Does not meet CEA (n=2145) 82%

■ Meets CEA (n=461)
■ Does not meet CEA (n=2145)
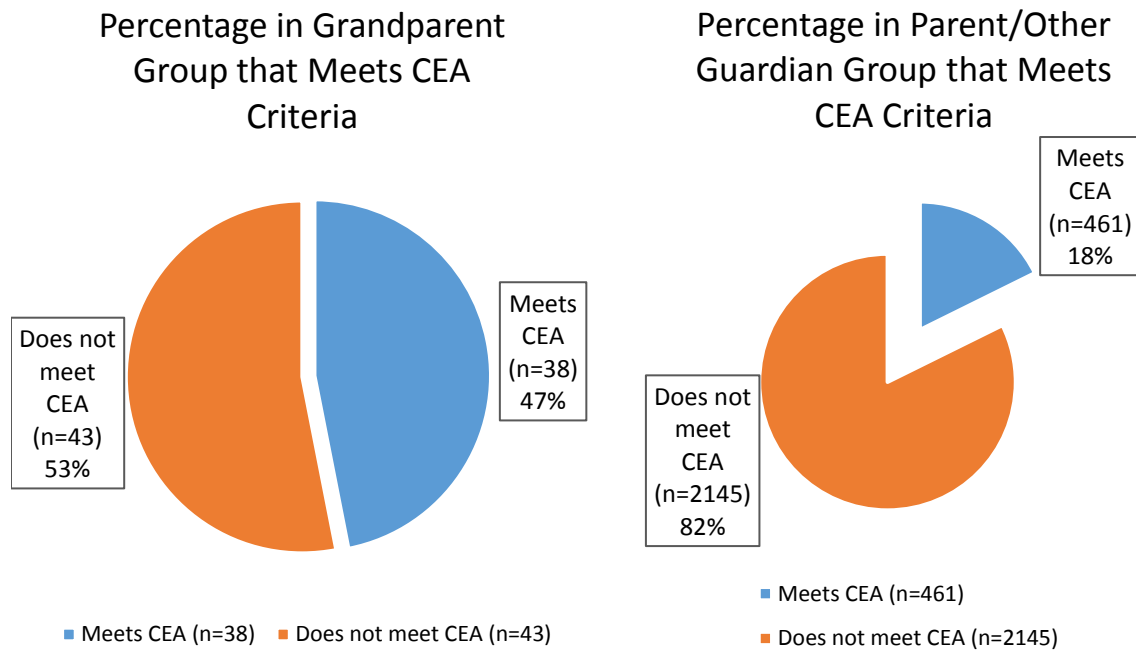
Figure 6. Comparison of Grandparent Group that Meets CEA compared to Parent/Other Guardian Group that Does Not Meet CEA
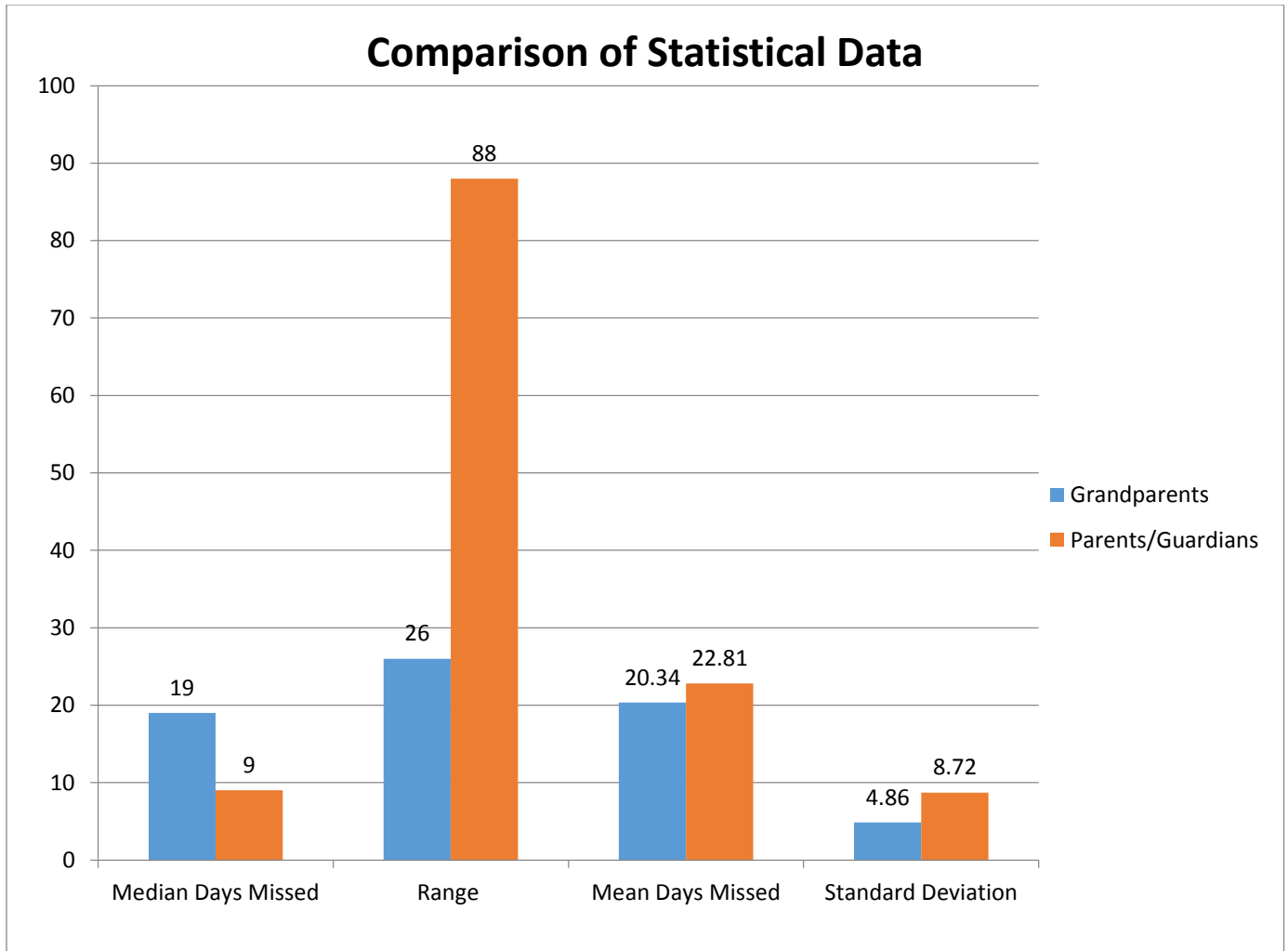
Figure 7. Comparison of Statistical Data of Grandparents and Parents/Guardians with Chronic Early Absence

Statistical Analysis

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between guardianship (parent/other guardian-led vs grandparent-led households) and chronic early absence in this study. Children in grandparent-led households were significantly more likely to meet the criteria of chronic early absence than children from parent/other guardian-led households, X^2 (4) = 2857.4, $p < .000$.

Table 1

Chi-Square Test: Likelihood of Chronic Early Absence in Grandparent-Led Households vs. Parent/Other Guardian-Led Households

GROUPINGS	*M(SD)*	CHI-SQUARE VALUE	*df*	*P*
GRANDPARENTS	20.34 (4.86)	2857.413[a]	4	.000
PARENTS/OTHER GUARDIANS	22.81 (8.72)			

Note: $N = 2811$. Confidence Interval=95%; M = mean; SD = Standard Deviation; a. 1 cell (11.1%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.57.

Socioeconomic Status of Grandparent-Led Families vs. Parent/Other Guardian-Led Families

To determine socioeconomic status for the participants, data from Skyward was retrieved on the total population and analyzed to determine the numbers in the population that received free meals, reduced-price meals, and paid full price for meals. Table 2 represents the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals, which is used to determine eligibility in the meals program in public schools. The shaded column represents the federal poverty guidelines for the school year 2012-2013. Families who received reduced-price meals have incomes that fall at or below the ranges in the reduced-price meals column based on the number of family members in the household. Families who received free meals have incomes that fall at or below the ranges in the free meals column based on the number of family members in the household. It should be noted that not all families who qualify for free or reduced meals choose to participate in the program, so at best this is an approximation of socioeconomic status

Table 2

Table of Federal Poverty Guidelines Based on Household Size

		INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES										
		Effective from		July 1, 2012	to	June 30, 2013						
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES ANNUAL	REDUCED PRICE MEALS - 185 %					FREE MEALS - 130 %					
		ANNUAL	MONTHLY	TWICE PER MONTH	EVERY TWO WEEKS	WEEKLY	ANNUAL	MONTHLY	TWICE PER MONTH	EVERY TWO WEEKS	WEEKLY	
48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, GUAM, AND TERRITORIES												
1	11,170	20,665	1,723	862	795	398	14,521	1,211	606	559	280	
2	15,130	27,991	2,333	1,167	1,077	539	19,669	1,640	820	757	379	
3	19,090	35,317	2,944	1,472	1,359	680	24,817	2,069	1,035	955	478	
4	23,050	42,643	3,554	1,777	1,641	821	29,965	2,498	1,249	1,153	577	
5	27,010	49,969	4,165	2,083	1,922	961	35,113	2,927	1,464	1,351	676	
6	30,970	57,295	4,775	2,388	2,204	1,102	40,261	3,356	1,678	1,549	775	
7	34,930	64,621	5,386	2,693	2,486	1,243	45,409	3,785	1,893	1,747	874	
8	38,890	71,947	5,996	2,998	2,768	1,384	50,557	4,214	2,107	1,945	973	
For each add'l family member, add	3,960	7,326	611	306	282	141	5,148	429	215	198	99	
ALASKA												
1	13,970	25,845	2,154	1,077	995	498	18,161	1,514	757	699	350	
2	18,920	35,002	2,917	1,459	1,347	674	24,596	2,050	1,025	946	473	
3	23,870	44,160	3,680	1,840	1,699	850	31,031	2,586	1,293	1,194	597	
4	28,820	53,317	4,444	2,222	2,051	1,026	37,466	3,123	1,562	1,441	721	
5	33,770	62,475	5,207	2,604	2,403	1,202	43,901	3,659	1,830	1,689	845	
6	38,720	71,632	5,970	2,985	2,756	1,378	50,336	4,195	2,098	1,936	968	
7	43,670	80,790	6,733	3,367	3,108	1,554	56,771	4,731	2,366	2,184	1,092	
8	48,620	89,947	7,496	3,748	3,460	1,730	63,206	5,268	2,634	2,431	1,216	
For each add'l family member, add	4,950	9,158	764	382	353	177	6,435	537	269	248	124	
HAWAII												
1	12,860	23,791	1,983	992	916	458	16,718	1,394	697	643	322	
2	17,410	32,209	2,685	1,343	1,239	620	22,633	1,887	944	871	436	
3	21,960	40,626	3,386	1,693	1,563	782	28,548	2,379	1,190	1,098	549	
4	26,510	49,044	4,087	2,044	1,887	944	34,463	2,872	1,436	1,326	663	
5	31,060	57,461	4,789	2,395	2,211	1,106	40,378	3,365	1,683	1,553	777	
6	35,610	65,879	5,490	2,745	2,534	1,267	46,293	3,858	1,929	1,781	891	
7	40,160	74,296	6,192	3,096	2,858	1,429	52,208	4,351	2,176	2,008	1,004	
8	44,710	82,714	6,893	3,447	3,182	1,591	58,123	4,844	2,422	2,236	1,118	
For each add'l family member, add	4,550	8,418	702	351	324	162	5,915	493	247	228	114	

Retrieved from https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-03-23/pdf/2012-7036.pdf

In grades pre-k through 3rd, there were a total of 2,687 students. Within this group, 1,555 qualified for free lunches; 207 qualified for reduced-price lunches; and 925 paid full price for lunches. To further analyze this group, the researcher segregated the grandparents from the total population. Eighty-one of the students were classified as having grandparents as the custodial caregiver. Sixty-one grandparent-led families qualified for free meals; 3 qualified for reduced-price meals; and 17 paid full prices for meals. See Figure 8 for the breakdown of free, reduced and full-pay students in grandparent-led households. For the parent/other guardian-led households, 1,494 qualified for free lunches; 204 qualified for reduced-price lunches; and 908 paid full price for lunches. Figure 8 represents these numbers. These numbers and figures

indicate that a larger percentage of grandparent-led households (79%) are receiving free or reduced-price meals than are parent/other guardian-led households (65%), suggesting again that grandparent-led households constitute a vulnerable population.

Grandparent-Led Households who Receive Free, Reduced, and Full-Price Meals

Free (n=61)

Reduced (n=3)

Full (n=17)

Full (n=17) 21%

Reduced (n=3) 4%

Free (n=61) 75%

Parent/Other Guardian-Led Households who Receive Free, Reduced, and Full-Price Meals

Free (n=1494)

Reduced (n=204)

Full (n=908)

Full (n=908) 35%

Free (n=1494) 57%

Reduced (n=204) 8%
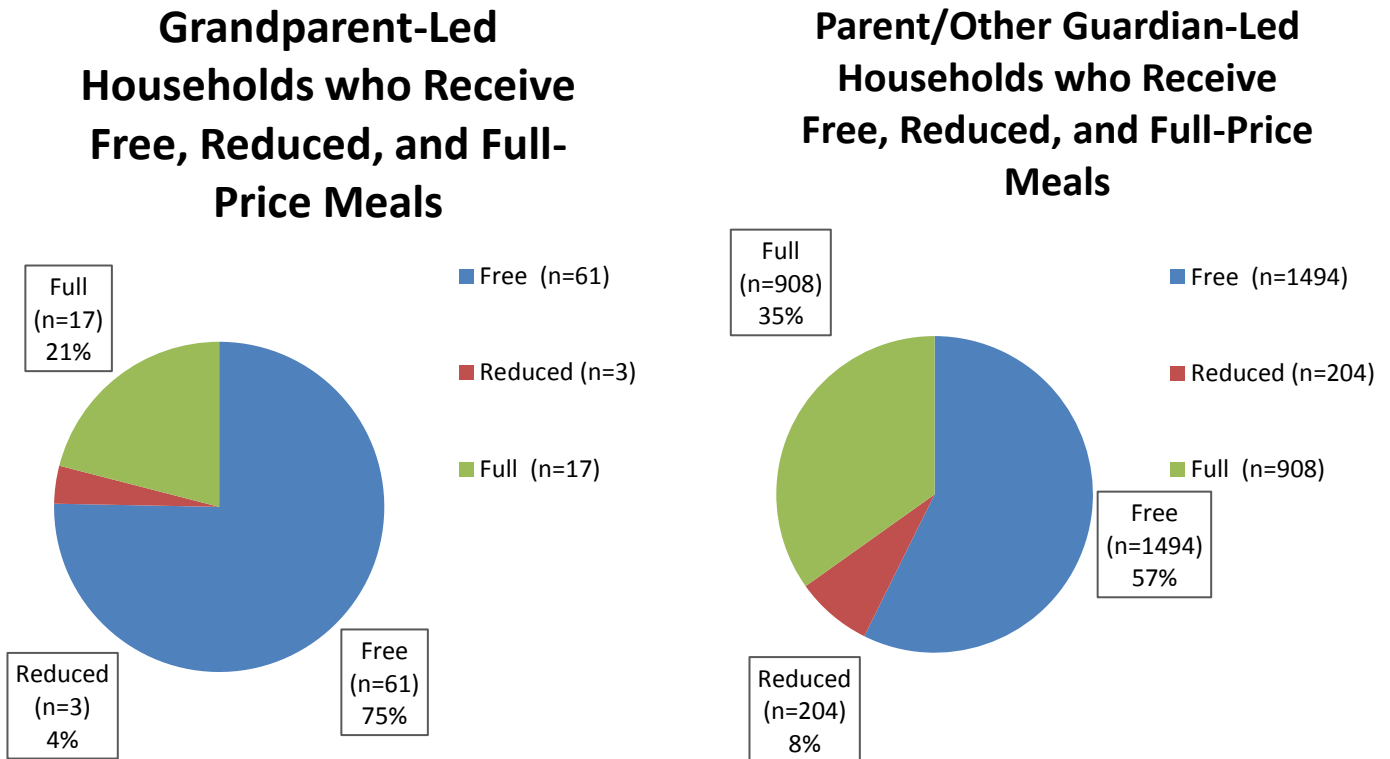
Figure 8. Comparison of Grandparent-Led Households who Receive Free, Reduced and Full-Price Meals vs. Parent/Other Guardian Households

Comparison of Education Level of Grandparent-Led Groups

Grandparents from both study groups were asked to state their highest level of education when filling out the questionnaire. The majority (78%, *n*=7) earned a high school diploma, one (11%) had some college experience, and one (11%) finished her junior year of high school. Of the grandparents with students who had chronic early absence, four (80%) had a high school diploma, and one (20%) attended through her junior year. Of the grandparents with students who

had a high attendance rates, three (75%) had a high school diploma, and one (25%) had some

college. None of the grandparents reported a college degree or certificated program**.** Figure 9

represents a comparison of this data.

Grandparents' Highest Level of Education in CEA Families

Grandparents' Highest Level of Education in High Attendance Families
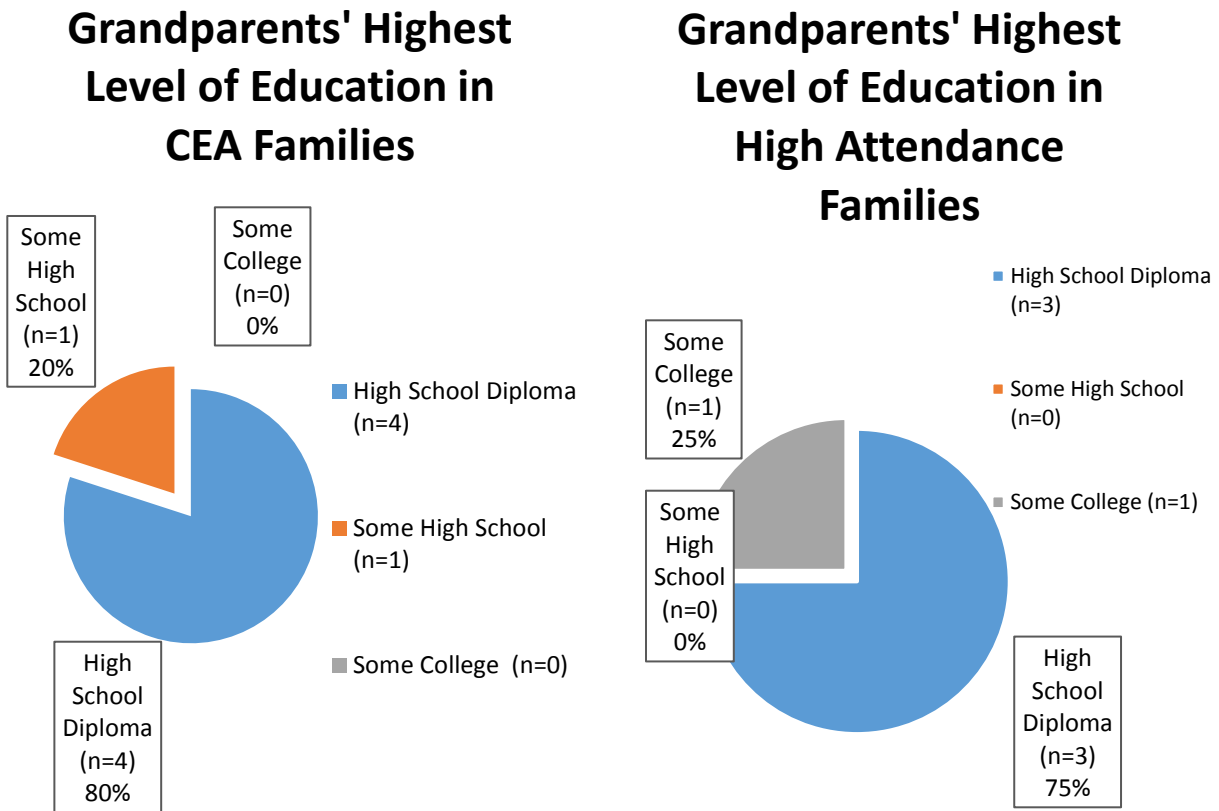
Figure 9. Comparison of Grandparents' Highest Level of Education in Grandparent-Led Groups

The grandparent questionnaire asked if the parent(s) were involved in the lives of the

student and in the education of the student. The majority (80%) of parent(s) were not involved in

the lives and education of those students with high absenteeism rates. One grandparent (20%)

answered "not much." Two grandparents (50%) in the group with high attendance rates reported

having parents involved with the education and life decisions of the grandchildren. One (25%)

noted "not much" and another (25%) reported no parental involvement. Figure 10 represents this

data belo**w.**

Biological Parent(s) Involved in Life/Education

Yes (n=0) 0%

Not Much (n=1) 20%

No (n=4) 80%

- Yes (n=0)
- Not Much (n=1)
- No (n=4)

Biological Parent(s) Involved in Life/Education

No (n=1) 25%

Yes (n=2) 50%

Not Much (n=1) 25%

- Yes (n=2)
- Not Much (n=1)
- No (n=1)
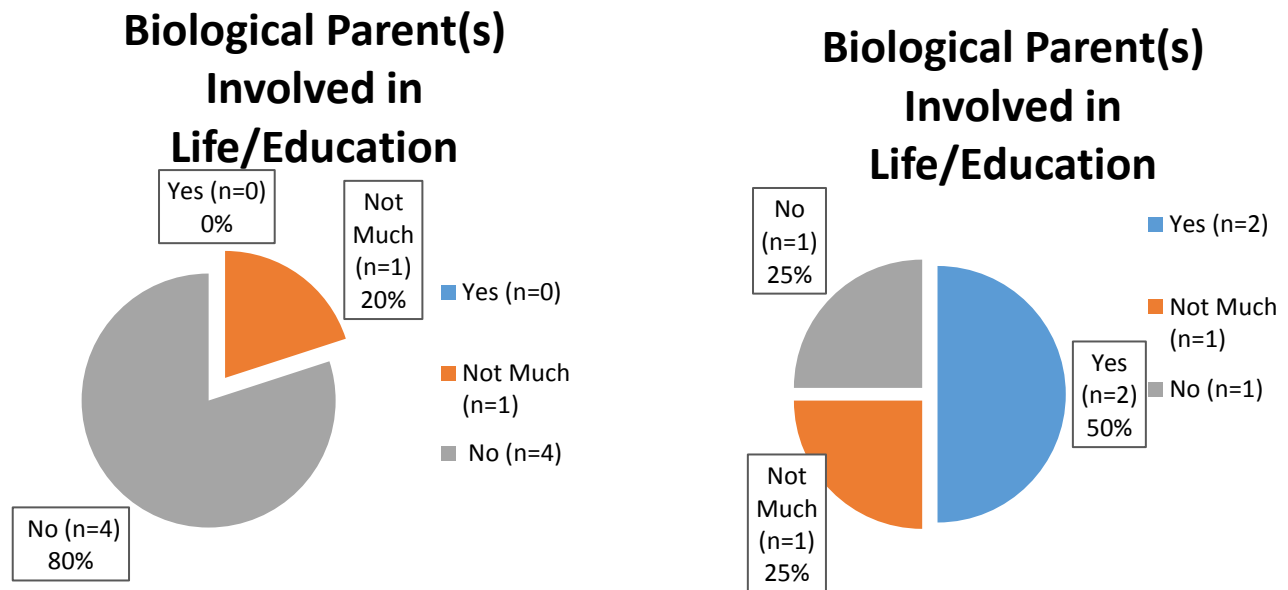
Figure 10. Comparison of Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates' Involvement of Biological Parent(s) in the Child's Life or Education

Disciplinary History of Students

The Skyward database offered information concerning any disciplinary actions against the students in the study groups. Examples of disciplinary actions include out-of-school suspension for one to three days, in-school suspension for one to three days, and parent/guardian phone call. Reasons for disciplinary action include theft, physical violence towards teacher or other student, and cheating. The researcher compared disciplinary data of the students with high absenteeism and those with high attendance to see if there was a connection in disciplinary action and absenteeism. Of the five children from the CEA group, only one student (20%) had two disciplinary actions on his record. All of the children in the high attendance group (100%) had disciplinary actions, for a total of 71 total disciplinary actions (ranging from 1 to 46 per child) for four children. Figure 11 represents a comparison of the number of disciplinary actions per child in the grandparent-led households with chronic early absence and the number of

disciplinary actions per child in the grandparent-led households with high attendance. The difference in disciplinary actions in this group was much higher than the group with chronic early absence, an unexpected and unexplained phenomenon. There may be a relationship between parent involvement in the child's life (higher in the HA group) and greater number of disciplinary actions that should be explored, including having to contact parents more because of disciplinary actions (suggesting a trigger other than contact with parent), or having sporadic involvement with parent(s) causing stress or confusion, which may be the trigger for outbursts and subsequent disciplinary actions.
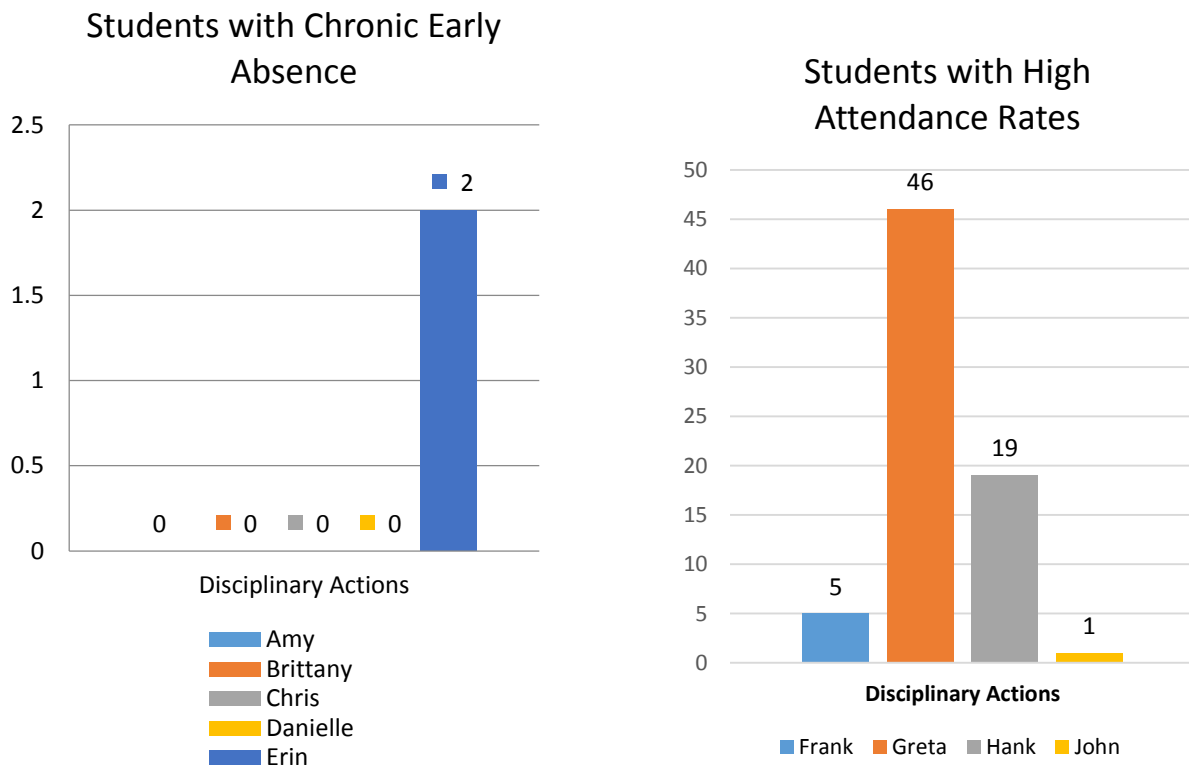
Figure 11. Comparison of Number of Disciplinary Actions Between Students with Chronic Early Absence and Students with High Attendance Rates

Demographic Survey of Case Study Group

The Skyward Database offered some demographic information about the grandparents. All of the participants (100%) in this case study are Caucasian, which is representative of the

population ethnicity majority in this East Tennessee county. Eight (89%) of the grandparents were female, and one (11%) was male, although it should be noted that in five of the households there was also a grandfather present, even though the grandmother was the study participant. Figure 12 represents a comparison of the data segregated into the households with chronic early absence and households with high attendance. For both groups, the grandparent in the household was Caucasian and primarily the grandmother (although again, there were also 5 grandfathers who did not participate in the study but were part of a two-grandparent household in which the grandmother was the study participant).

Work status was determined after analyzing the questionnaires. Of the grandparents of students with chronic early absence,two were disabled (40%), two did not work (40%), and one worked part-time (20%). Three of the grandparents with children who have high attendance rates worked in a skilled position with one (25%) working part-time and two (50%) working full-time. One grandparent (25%) in this group did not work. Figure 13 represents this data below and indicates that grandparents in the high attendance group were more likely to work (75%) than grandparents in the chronic early absence group (20%). Grandparents in the chronic early absence group were more likely to be disabled (40%) or not work (40%) than grandparents in the high attendance group (none disabled, 25% unemployed).

Four (80%) of the study group with chronic early absence had only one grandparent in the household. One (20%) had both grandparents in the home. All of the students (100%) with high attendance rates had both grandparents in the household. This information was gleaned from the Skyward Database. Figure 14 represents a comparison of this data below and indicates clearly that for students with high attendance, they are much more likely (100%) to have both grandparents in the home compared to students from the chronic early absence group (20%).

Gender of Grandparents in Chronic Early Absence Household

Male (n=0) 0%

Female (n=5) 100%

■ Female (n=5) ■ Male (n=0)
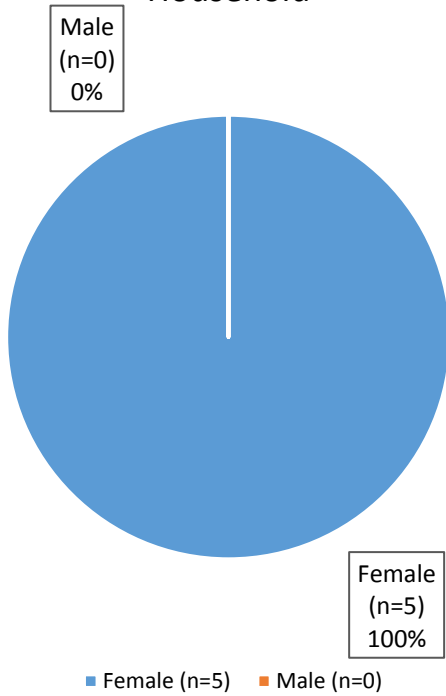
Gender of Grandparents in High Attendance Household

Male (n=1) 25%

Female (n= 3) 75%

■ Female (n= 3) ■ Male (n=1)
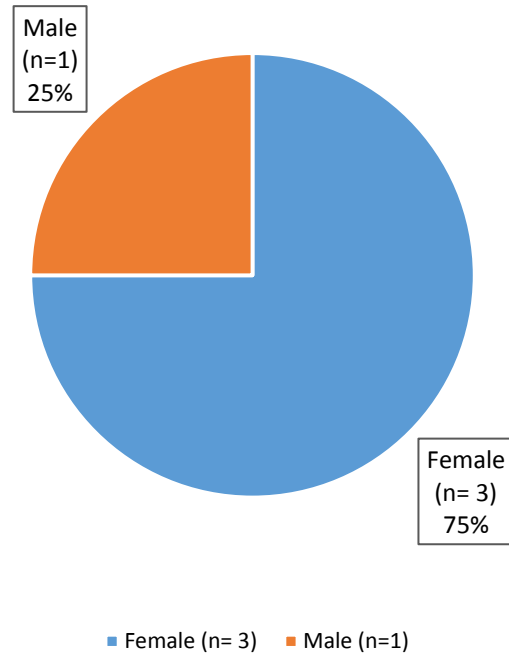
Figure 12. Comparison of Gender of Grandparents in Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance Households

Employment Status of Grandparent Households with Chronic Early Absence

- Does not Work (n=2) — 40%
- Disabled (n=2) — 40%
- Part-Time Service Industry (n=1) — 20%
- Full-Time Service Industry (n=0) — 0%
- Full-time Manufacturing (n=0) — 0%

Employment Status of Grandparent Households with High Attendance

- Does not Work (n=1) — 25%
- Disabled (n=0) — 0%
- Part-Time Service Industry (n=1) — 25%
- Full-Time Service Industry (n=1) — 25%
- Full-time Manufacturing (n=1) — 25%

Figure 13. Comparison of Employment Status Between Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance

Two-Grandparent Status of Families with Chronic Early Absenteeism

Both Grandparents (n=1) 20%

Single Grandparent (n=4) 80%

- Single Grandparent (n=4)
- Both Grandparents (n=1)

Two-Grandparent Status of Families with High Attendance Rates

Single Grandparent (n=0) 0%

Both Grandparents (n=4) 100%

- Single Grandparent (n=0)
- Both Grandparents (n=4)
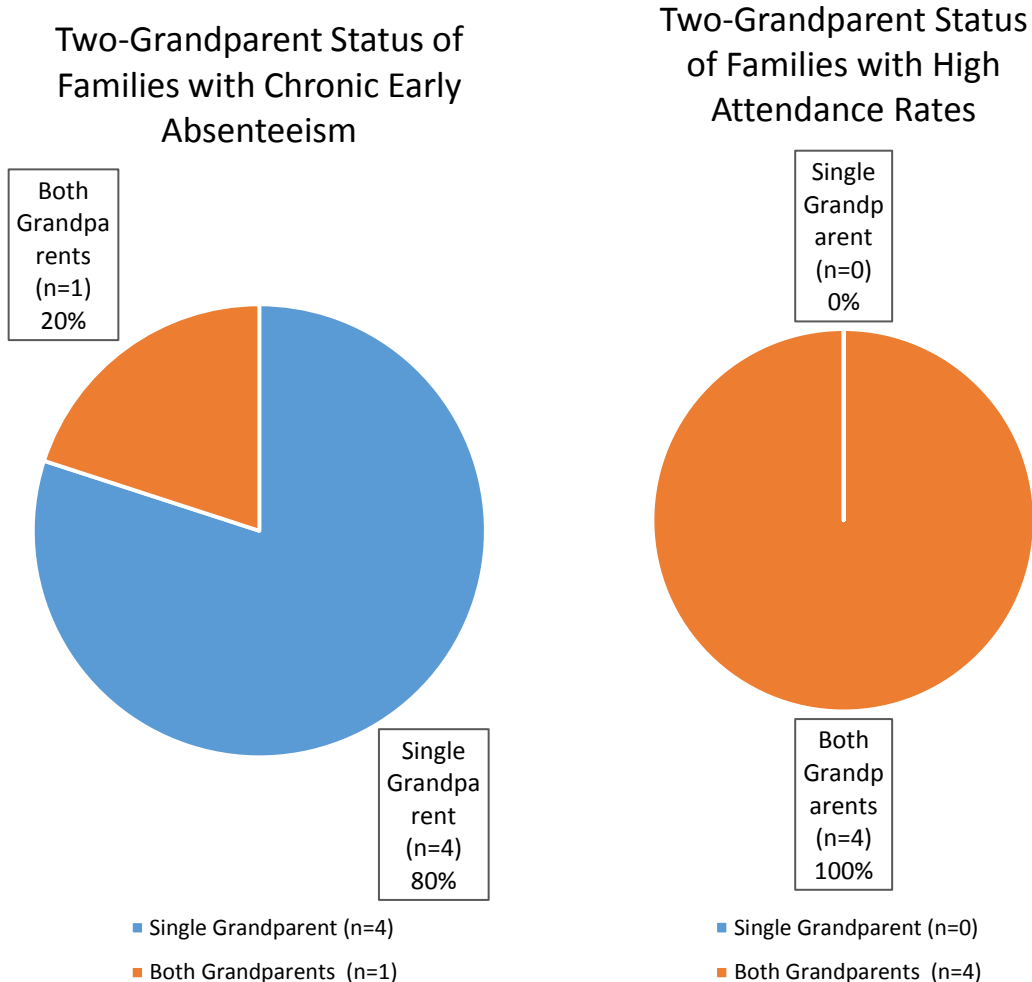
Figure 14. Comparison of Two-Grandparent Status of Families with Chronic Early Absenteeism and High Attendance Rates

Computer/Technology Use

Grandparent questionnaires included queries concerning ownership of a computer; connection to the internet; use of email; ownership of a cell phone; ownership of a smartphone; use of text messages; and use of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. The group with chronic early absence reported that two (40%) have a computer in the home, and three (60%) do not. Figure 15 below reflects a comparison of this data. In the CEA group, only one (20%) participant had internet service. The other four (80%) did not have internet access at

home. Figure 16 reflects a comparison of this data. None of the participants (100%) in the CEA group used email, text messaging, social media or other services. Figure 17 represents a comparison of this data. Everyone (100%) in the CEA group owned cell phones, but none were smartphones. Figure 18 reflects a comparison of this data. One (20%) participant in the CEA group was comfortable using the computer, one (20%) was not comfortable, and the other three (60%) did not have a computer and so did not answer the question. Figure 20 represents a comparison of this data.

The entire group with high attendance rates owned a computer in the home (100%), reflected in Figure 15, and it was connected to the internet for the entire group (100%), reflected in Figure 16. None of the high attendance group used email. The entire high attendance group owned a cell phone (100%), which is reflected in Figure 18, and all (100%) used text messaging, which is reflected in Figure 19. Two (50%) of the grandparents had smartphones, while the other two (50%) did not, which is reflected in Figure 18. Two (50%) of the grandparents in the high attendance group used social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram, and the other two (50%) did not use any social media. Two (50%) of the participants noted they were comfortable using a computer, one (25%) was "not really" comfortable, and one (25%) was not comfortable. This data is reflected in Figure 20.

Computer in the Home of Families with Chronic Early Absence

Computer in the Home (n=2) 40%

No computer in the Home (n=3) 60%

- Computer in the Home (n=2)
- No computer in the Home (n=3)

Computer in the Home of Families with High Attendance Rates

No Computer in the Home (n=0) 0%

Computer in the Home (n=4) 100%

- Computer in the Home (n=4)
- No Computer in the Home (n=0)
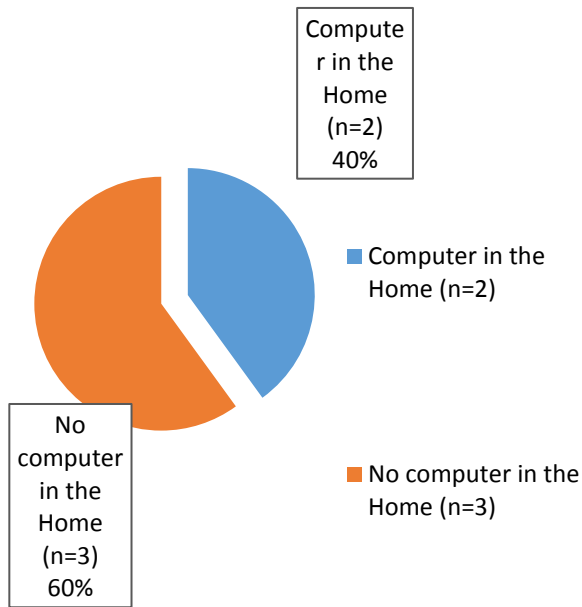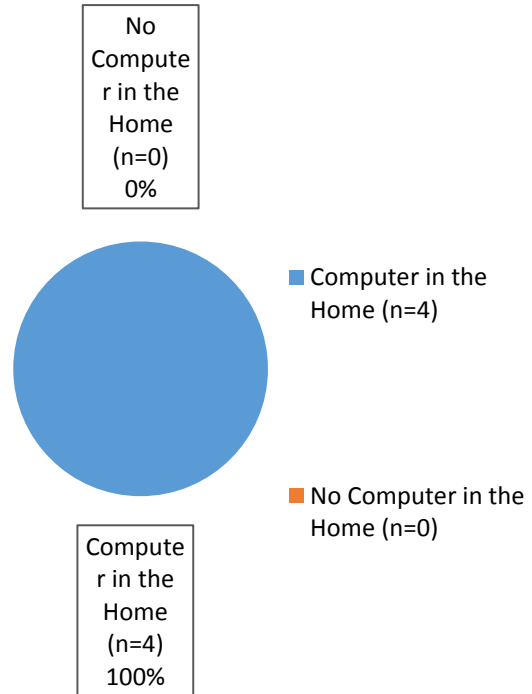
Figure 15. Comparison of Computers in the Home of Families with Chronic Early Absence and Families with High Attendance Rates
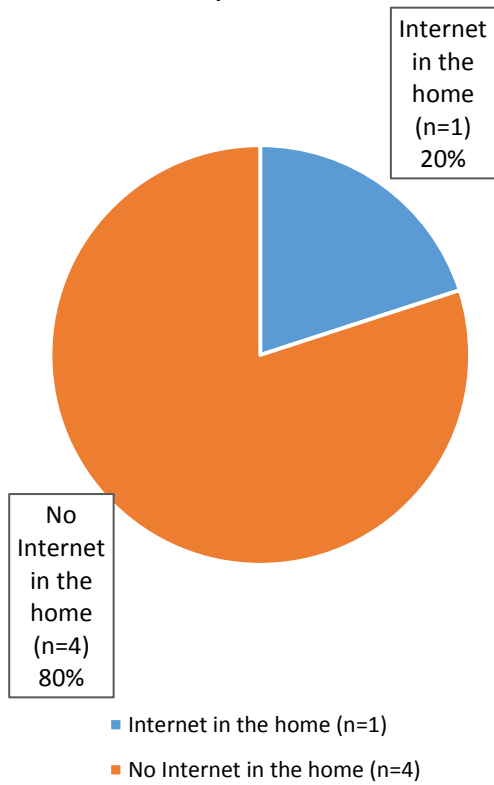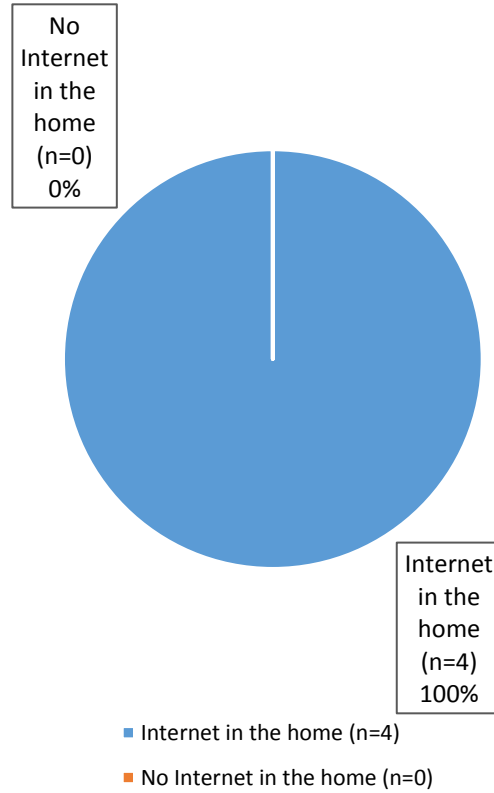
Figure 16. Comparison of Internet Connection in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic
Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Use of Social Media in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence

Uses social media (n=0) 0%

- Uses social media (n=0)

- Does not use social media (n=5)

Does not use social media (n=5) 100%

Use of Social Media in Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Does not use social media (n=2) 50%

- Uses social media (n=2)

- Does not use social media (n=2)

Uses social media (n=2) 50%
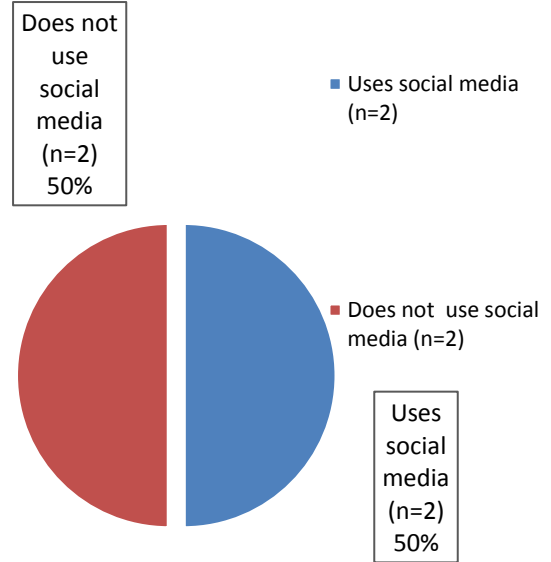
Figure 17. Comparison of Use of Social Media in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Smartphones in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence

Smartphones in Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Own a Smartphone (n=0) 0%

■ Own a Smartphone (n=0)

■ Do not own a Smartphone (n=5)

Do not own a Smartphone (n=5) 100%

Do not own a Smartphone (n=2) 50%

■ Own a Smartphone (n=2)

■ Do not own a Smartphone (n=2)

Own a Smartphone (n=2) 50%
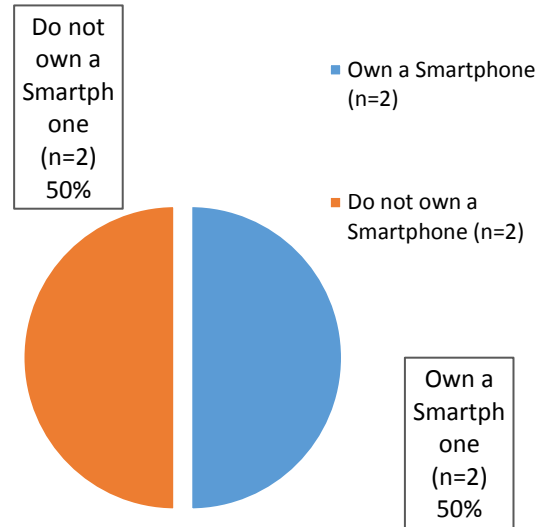
Figure 18. Comparison of Smartphones Used in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Use of Text Messaging in Grandparent-Led Households with Early Chronic Absence
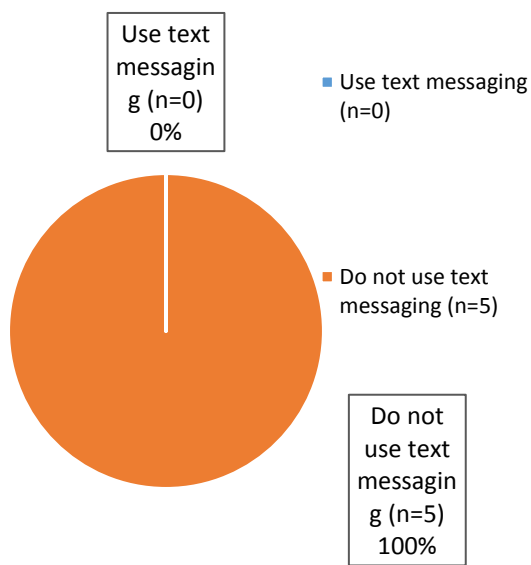
Use text messaging (n=0) 0%

■ Use text messaging (n=0)

■ Do not use text messaging (n=5)

Do not use text messaging (n=5) 100%

Use of Text Messaging in Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Do not use text messaging (n=0) 0%

■ Use text messaging (n=4)

■ Do not use text messaging (n=0)

Use text messaging (n=4) 100%
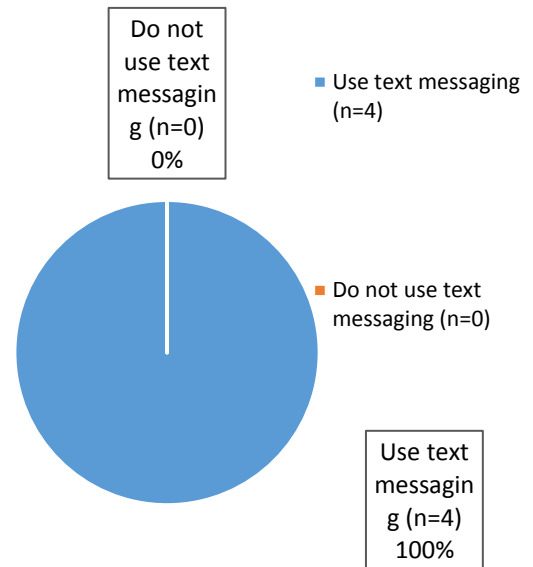
Figure 19. Comparison of Use of Text Messaging in Grandparent-Led Households with Early Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Comfort Level Using a Computer in a Grandparent-Led Household with Chronic Early Absence

Not Applicable (n=3) 60%

Comfortable Using Computer (n=1) 20%

Not Comfortable Using Computer (n=1) 20%

- Comfortable Using Computer (n=1)
- Not Comfortable Using Computer (n=1)
- Not Applicable (n=3)

Comfort Level Using a Computer in a Grandparent-Led Household with High Attendance Rates

Not Comfortable Using Computer (n=1) 25%

- Comfortable Using Computer (n=2)
- Not Really Comfortable Using Computer (n=1)
- Not Comfortable Using Computer (n=1)

Not Really Comfortable Using Computer (n=1) 25%

Comfortable Using Computer (n=2) 50%
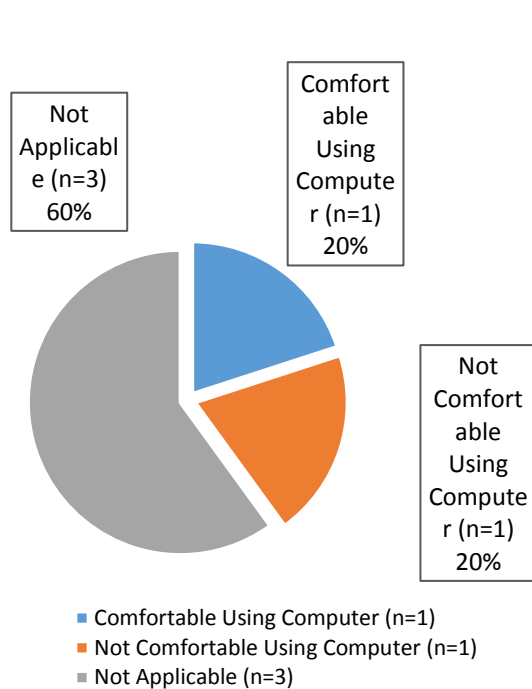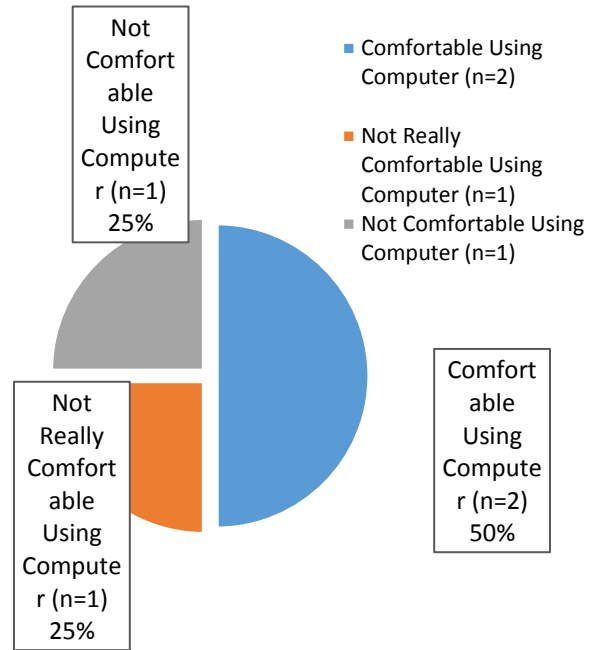
Figure 20. Comparison of Comfort Level Using a Computer in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Common Themes in Information Methods

Themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013). Data (e.g., descriptions, comments, examples) were analyzed by the researcher, and key words were used to code segments of interviews, questionnaires, and database information. These codes were then grouped based on themes from questions, reducing them to a small, manageable set of themes (Creswell, 2013). For the sake of accuracy and reliability purposes, the dissertation chair also coded all grandparent, teacher, and Family Resource Center personnel questionnaire data. Any

disagreements in coding between the chair and the primary researcher were discussed, and changes were made to ensure 100% agreement between coders.

Table 3 provides the major results of the open coding analysis of the data from the group of five grandparent-led households with chronic early absence describing the reasons for high absenteeism rates and Table 4 reflects the common themes in relation to challenges to good attendance. Table 5 represents common themes in the group of grandparent-led households with high attendance rates describing the reasons for high attendance.

Table 3

Common Themes for Reasons for Absences in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence

GROUP	REASONS FOR ABSENCE	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Sick	3	**HEALTH**	5
	Sick -premature	1		
	Sick -parental drug use	1		

Table 4

Common Themes for Challenges to Attendance in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence

GROUP	CHALLENGES TO ATTENDANCE	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Doesn't eat well	1	**NUTRITION**	1
	Sick a lot	2	**HEALTH**	4
	Sickly	1		
	No tolerance	1		

Table 5

Common Themes for Reasons for Good Attendance in Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance

GROUP	REASONS FOR HIGH ATTENDANCE	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
HIGH ATTENDANCE RATES	No question about going	1	**Important to grandparent**	3
	Want her to have a good life	1		
	Education is important to me	1		
	Child loves school	1	**Important to child**	1

Table 6 provides the major results of the open coding analysis of the data from the group

of five grandparent-led households with chronic early absence and the group of four

grandparent-led households with high attendance rates describing what methods of

communication are actually being used, what methods of communication are preferred by the

grandparent groups, and what type of information is being shared.

Table 6

Actual Method of Communication Being Used in Both Groups

GROUP	ACTUAL METHOD	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Phone	4	**VERBAL**	4
	Notes	2	**WRITTEN**	3
	Letters	1		
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	Phone	3	**VERBAL**	3
	Notes	2		
	Flyers	2	**WRITTEN**	4
TOTAL	Notes	4	**WRITTEN**	7
	Flyers	2		
	Letters	1		
	Phone Calls	4	**VERBAL**	4

Table 7

Preferred Method of Communication for Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance

GROUP	PREFERRED METHOD	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Notes	2	WRITTEN	3
	Letters	1		
	Phone Calls	3	VERBAL	3
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	Notes	2	WRITTEN	3
	Flyers	1		
	Phone Calls	1	VERBAL	1
TOTAL	Notes	4	WRITTEN	6
	Flyers	1		
	Letters	1		
	Phone Calls	4	VERBAL	4

Table 8

Types of Information Being Shared with Grandparent Groups

GROUP	TYPE OF INFORMATION	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Buying Stuff	1	**MONEY**	1
	Stuff Going On	1	**EVENTS, TRIPS, CONFERENCES, MEETINGS**	2
	Trips	1		
	Homework	2	**HOMEWORK**	2
	Absences	1	**ATTENDANCE**	1
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	Needing Money	1	**MONEY**	2
	Buying Yearbooks	1		
	Events	1	**EVENTS, TRIPS, CONFERENCES, MEETINGS**	4
	Meetings	2		
	Parent/Teacher Conferences	1		
TOTAL	Buying Stuff	1	**MONEY**	3
	Needing Money	1		
	Buying Yearbooks	1		
	Stuff Going On	1	**EVENTS, TRIPS, CONFERENCES, MEETINGS**	6
	Trips	1		
	Events	1		
	Meetings	2		
	Parent/Teacher Conferences	1		
	Homework	2	**HOMEWORK**	2
	Absences	1	**ATTENDANCE**	1

Information Shared by the School System with Grandparent-Led Families with CEA
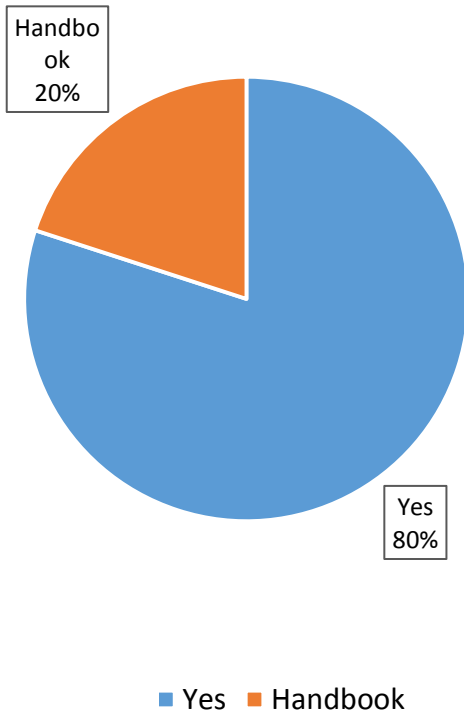
Information Shared by the School System with Grandparent-Led Families with HA

Handbook 20%

Yes 80%

Yes | Handbook

Handbook 25%

Yes 75%

Yes | Handbook
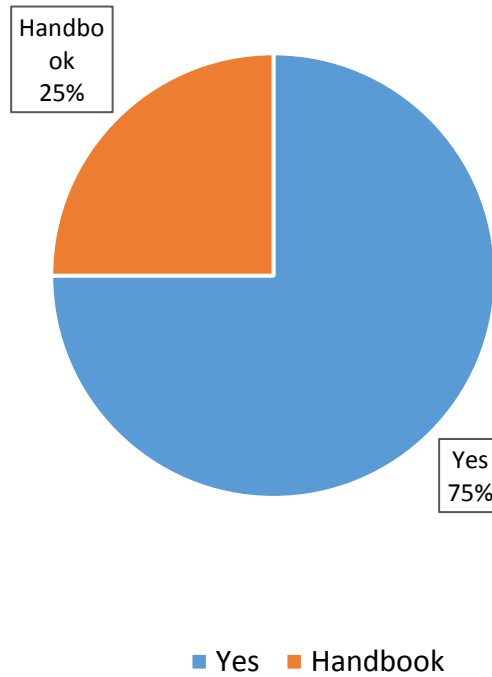
Figure 21. Comparison of Information Shared by the School System with Grandparent-Led Families with CEA and Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance

Relationships with School Personnel and Use of Services

Grandparents were asked to describe any relationships they had with the school counselor in their grandchildren's schools, with their grandchildren's teachers, or with anyone at the Family Resource Center. Tables 9-11 provide the major results of the open coding analysis of the data from both groups concerning relationships with school personnel and perceived supports for grandchildren's education.

Table 9

Common Themes of Relationships with School Counselors in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance

GROUP	RELATIONSHIP	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	No Response	3	NO RESPONSE	3
	No	1	NO RELATIONSHIP	2
	Don't know him/her	1		
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	No response	2	NO RESPONSE	2
	I don't	1	NO RELATIONSHIP	2
	Don't have one	1		
TOTAL	No Response	5	NO RESPONSE	5
	No	2	NO RELATIONSHIP	4
	Don't know him/her	1		
	Don't have one	1		

Table 10

Common Themes of Relationships with Grandchild's Teacher in Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance

GROUP	RELATIONSHIP	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	Good Relationship	4	GOOD	4
	Talk Regularly-How things are	1	TALK/CALL	3
	Talk-Homework	1		
	Call about attendance	1		
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	Good	2	GOOD	3
	Friendly	1		
	Talk Regularly-How things are	1	TALK/CALL	2
	Talk-Questions	1		
	Good to help me	1	HELPS	1
TOTAL	Good Relationship	4	GOOD	7
	Good	2		
	Friendly	1		
	Talk Regularly-How things are	2	TALK/CALL	5
	Talk-Homework	1		
	Talk-Questions	1		
	Call about attendance	1		
	Good to help me	1	HELPS	1

Table 11

Common Themes of Relationships with Family Resource Center Staff in Grandparent-Led
Households with Chronic Early Absence and High Attendance

GROUP	RELATIONSHIP	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
CHRONIC EARLY ABSENCE GROUP	No Response/Don't Know	3	**NO RESPONSE (May indicate no relationship)**	3
	Participate in Backpack Program	2	**RECEIVE SERVICES**	3
	Participate in Food Pantry	1		
HIGH ATTENDANCE GROUP	No Response/Don't Know	2	**NO RESPONSE/NO RELATIONSHIP**	3
	No relationship	1		
	Participate in backpack program	1	**RECEIVE SERVICES**	1
TOTAL	No response/Don't know	5	**NO RESPONSE/NO RELATIONSHIP**	6
	No relationship	1		
	Participate in Backpack Program	3	**RECEIVE SERVICES**	4
	Participate in Food Pantry	1		

Transportation to and from School

Grandparents in each group were asked about transportation to and from school. In the

group with chronic early absence, four grandparents (80%) stated they had reliable

transportation, and one (20%) stated "not right now." Two (40%) of the grandparents in this

group drove their grandchildren to school, one (20%) had a neighbor who took her grandchild to

school, and two (40%) grandchildren rode the bus. None of the grandchildren in this group

participated in after-school activities. Grandparents in the high attendance group all (100%)

reported having reliable transportation, and all (100%) transported their grandchildren to school.

Additionally half (50%) also had help with transportation from the child's biological parent.

None of the grandchildren in this group participated in after-school activities. A comparison of this data is represented in Figure 22 below.
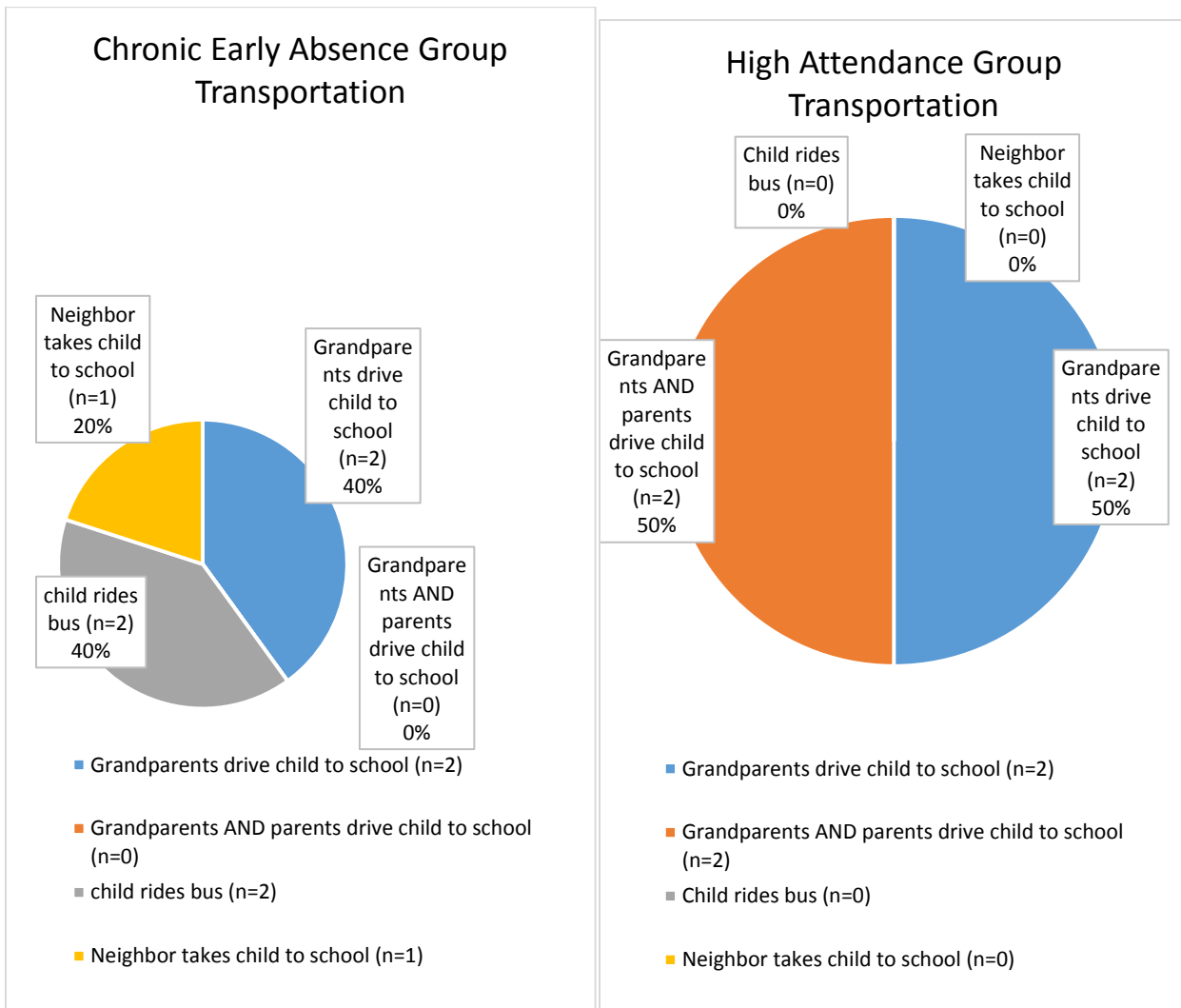
Figure 22. Comparison of Transportation Methods Between Grandparent-Led Households with Chronic early Absence and Grandparent-Led Households with High Attendance Rates

Additional Information from Grandparents

Each participant in both groups was given the opportunity to share additional information with the researcher. Two in the group with chronic early absence did not reply. One noted, concerning attendance, that "it's very important to me." Another stated "homework is an issue sometimes. My neighbor helps." The fifth grandparent in this group reported that, "I know it's

important for her to be at school, but she stays sick. We go to the doctor a lot, so her absences are excused."

In the group with high attendance, three had no additional information to add or did not respond to the question, and one replied, "We have good friends that help us keep up with what other kids are doing. That helps!"

<div align="center">

Teacher Data

</div>

To expound on a perceived disconnect between school personnel and grandparent perceptions, four preschool teachers were asked to participate in this study. These were not teachers of the grandchildren but instead were chosen based on a general awareness of the growth of the grandparent-led household population in the four preschool classrooms located across the county. Three agreed to participate and were emailed a questionnaire that asked about their perceptions of grandparents' needs, delivery of information, and perceived services. To better understand the contributions from this group, the researcher has included a brief profile of the teachers who chose to participate and changed their names for confidentiality.

Teacher One

Tabby is a 40-year-old, 12-year veteran teacher in a state-funded pre-k classroom located in a small rural pre-k through 8th grade school. She is the mother of three and is married to her high school sweetheart. Tabby has a Master's Degree in Early Childhood. Her husband is disabled.

Teacher Two

Trena is a 26-year-old teacher in her second year as a state-funded preschool teacher. Her classroom is located in a primary school serving pre-k through 2nd grade in the city limits of a

town with a population of 4,433. She has a B.S. Degree in Early Childhood and graduated two years ago. She is married and does not have children.

Teacher Three

Terry is a 39-year-old, first-year teacher licensed in pre-k through 3rd grade. She came to pre-k after the school year began and is categorized as an interim teacher. Her classroom is also located in the same primary school as Trena. Terry was previously a correctional officer in a high school located out of state. She is married to her second husband, and they do not have children together. Her ex-husband was a police officer and abused both Terry and their young son. Terry also has a teenage daughter, but paternity was not revealed during the interview.

Two of the teachers (67%) had heard of chronic early absence, and one (33%) had not. This data is represented below in Figure 23 as a comparison with the grandparents and Family Resource Center Staff's knowledge of chronic early absence.
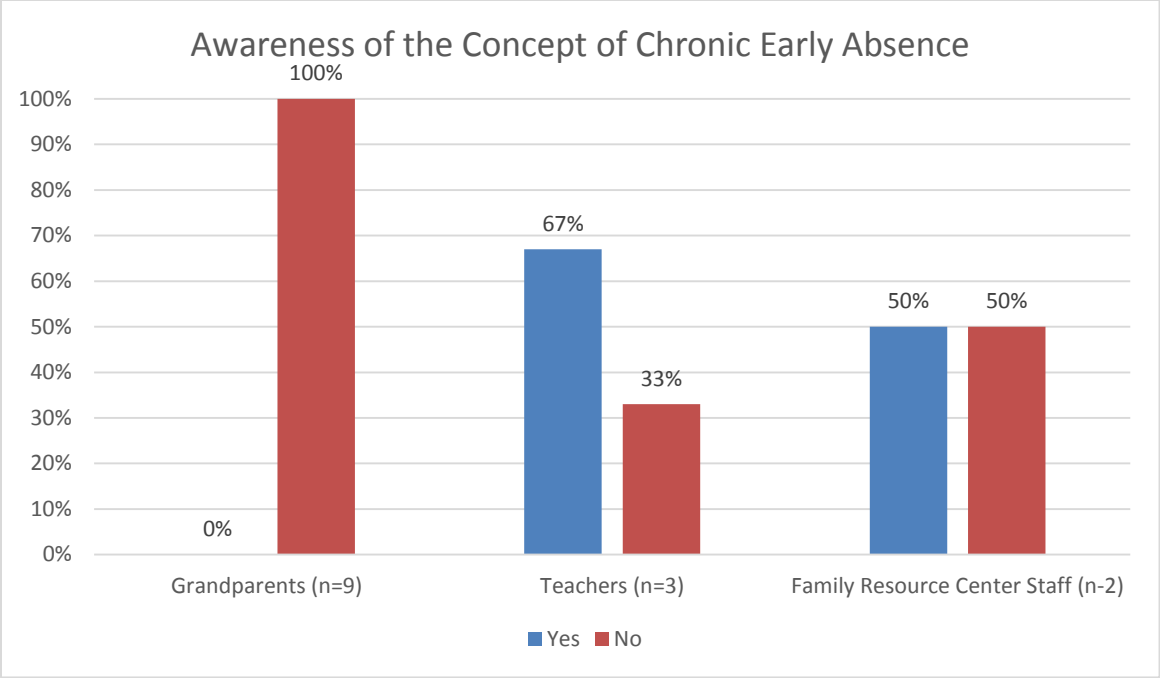
Figure 23. Comparison of Teacher, Family Resource Center Staff, and Grandparents'
Knowledge of Chronic Early Absence

Tables 11 and 12 provide the major results of the open coding analysis of the data from

the teacher group that was asked if they perceived grandparents as an "at-risk population" and

what method they perceived information was most often shared. When asked about special

services that teachers perceived as being important for grandparents to help support their

grandchildren's education, themes that emerged were homework help, technology assistance,

and ability to access technology. Table 13 reflects additional comments from the teachers

concerning grandparent-led households.

Table 12

Common Themes of Perceived Risk Factors in Grandparent-Led Households by Teachers

TEACHER	PERCEIVED RISK	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
TABBY	Life-changing event	1	**TRAUMATIC EVENT**	1
TRENA	No defined role model	1	**GUIDANCE**	2
	Need guidance & support	1		
TERRY	Child separated from parent	1	**Traumatic Event** **Rejection**	2 1
	Traumatic event Feelings of rejection	1 1		
TOTAL	Life-changing event	1	**TRAUMATIC EVENT**	3
	Child separated from parent	1	**REJECTION**	1
	Traumatic event	1		
	No defined role model	1	**GUIDANCE**	2
	Need guidance & support	1		

Table 13

Common Themes of Methods of Communication from Teachers

TEACHER	PREFERRED METHOD	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
TABBY	Folders	1	**WRITTEN**	1
TRENA	Student handbook	1	**WRITTEN**	1
	Parent meetings	1		
			VERBAL	1
TERRY	Writing	1	**WRITTEN**	1
	Parent meetings	1		
			VERBAL	1
TOTAL	Folders	1	**WRITTEN**	3
	Writing	1		
	Face-to-face	1	**VERBAL**	2
	Student handbook	1		
	Parent meetings	1		

Table 14

Additional Comments from Teacher Questionnaires

TEACHER	DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE COMMUNICATED	RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR GRANDPARENTS	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
TABBY	***40 years old *12 years teaching *Prek-8 Rural School *MA in ECE**	**No difference in communication between parents/other guardians and grandparents**	**Not sure of any services available**	**No additional comment**
TRENA	***26 years old *2 years teaching *Prek-2 Primary School in City Limits *BS in ECE**	**I do not think the schools communicated the importance of attendance.**	**There are various resources that are available to the guardians.**	**No additional comment**
TERRY	*39 years old *1 year teaching *Prek-2 Primary School in City Limits *Interim Teacher	The students I currently have who live in a grandparent-led household have a great attendance rate.	The same services that are available to biological parents.	*Although it may not be true for most custodial grandparents, the ones I have worked with directly truly understand the importance of education and will go out of their way to provide assistance to the school for the child to be successful. Children often feel embarrassed when their family-life isn't what they consider the norm.*

Family Resource Center Surveys

The Family Resource Center is a central hub for families in the school system who may struggle with behaviors; basic needs, such as food and clothing; and general resources that are made available to all families in the school system. Two employees of the Family Resource Center were asked to fill out questionnaires to gain their perceptions of services to the

grandparent population. To better understand the contributions from this group, the researcher has included a brief profile of the personnel who chose to participate and changed their names for confidentiality.

Director of Family Resource Center

Freda is a 31-year-old mother of two with a B.A. Degree in Social Work. She previously worked out of state at the Department of Children's Services and currently is on the school truancy board and attends juvenile court weekly representing the school system. Freda has a teenage son by a college boyfriend and is currently married. She and her new husband have a 5-month-old son together.

Family Resource Center Assistant

Francis is a 61-year-old mother of two who has been employed with the school system for 11 years. She previously was a secretary in a private business and has a high school diploma. Francis is married and recently lost her son due to a car wreck. She has four grandchildren and is very involved in their lives, especially the children of the son she lost.

Neither staff member had heard of chronic early absence, except the director who stated she had heard it mentioned in conversation but did not know exactly what it meant. Figure 23 represents this data. Both were asked what special services or information they perceived as being helpful to grandparents who wanted to support their grandchild's education. See Table 15 for this information.

As previously discussed, themes in qualitative research are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013). Data (e.g., descriptions, comments, examples) were analyzed by the researcher, and key words were used to code segments of interviews, questionnaires, and database information. These codes were then

grouped based on themes from questions, reducing them to a small, manageable set of themes (Creswell, 2013). For the sake of accuracy and reliability purposes, the dissertation chair also coded all Family Resource Center questionnaire data. Any disagreements in coding between the chair and the primary researcher were discussed, and changes were made to ensure 100% agreement between coders.

Table 15

Special Services/Information Needed as Perceived by the Family Resource Center Staff

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER STAFF	PERCEIVED SERVICES/ INFORMATION NEEDED	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
FRANCIS	Same needs as parent but gp may need extra time to discuss questions and changes	1	**TIME**	1
			INFORMATION	
	New or Extra Information about Changes	1	**LEGAL**	
			MONEY/TANGIBLE RESOURCES	1
	Legal Services	1		
	Financial Services	1		
FREDA	Information on services available to help with emotional and physical aspects of raising young children	1	**INFORMATION**	1
	Changes in technology needed to help child with homework and staying on grade level	1	**COMMUNITY CHANGES**	1
	Technology	1	**TECHNOLOGY**	1
	Support Programs	1	**SUPPORT PROGRAMS**	1
TOTAL	Same as parent but extra time to discuss questions and changes	1 1	**TIME**	1
			INFORMATION	1
	New or Extra Information about Changes	1	**LEGAL**	1
			MONEY/TANGIBLE RESOURCES	1
	Legal Services	1		1
	Financial Services	1	**INFORMATION**	2
	Information on services available to help with emotional and physical aspects of raising young children. Changes in technology needed to help child with homework and staying on grade level Technology		**COMMUNITY CHANGES**	1
			TECHNOLOGY	1
			SUPPORT PROGRAMS	1
	Support Programs			

Table 16

Common Themes of Perceived Risk Factors in Grandparent-Led Households by Family Resource Center Staff

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER STAFF	PERCEIVED RISK	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
FREDA	Life-changing event	1	TRAUMATIC EVENT	1
FRANCIS	Child separated from parent	1	TRAUMATIC EVENT	2
	Traumatic event	1	REJECTION	1
	Feelings of rejection	1		
	No defined role model	1	GUIDANCE	2
	Need guidance & support	1		
TOTAL	Life-changing event	1	TRAUMATIC EVENT	3
	Child separated from parent	1	REJECTION	1
	Traumatic event	1		
	No defined role model	1	GUIDANCE	2
	Need guidance & support	1		

Table 16 represents the common themes of perceived risks from the Family Resource

raising grandchildren. Table 17 denotes the common themes of perceived services available for

grandparent-led households by the Family Resource Center Staff. Table 18 reflects the actual

communication methods used by the Family Resource Center. Table 19 reflects additional

comments concerning the grandparent population by the Family Resource Center staff.

Table 17

Common Themes of Perceived Services Available for Grandparent-Led Households by the Family Resource Center Staff

FRC STAFF	SERVICES AVAILABLE	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
FREDA	Same offered to everyone	1	**SAME SERVICES**	1
	School counselors	1		1
			SCHOOL STAFF	
FRANCIS	Free pamphlets	1	**INFORMATION**	1
	School Supplies	1	**SUPPLIES**	2
	Clothes	1	**SCHOOL STAFF**	1
	School Staff	1	**SUPPORT GROUPS**	1
	Support groups	1		
TOTAL	Same offered to everyone	1	**SAME SERVICES**	1
	School counselors	1	**SCHOOL STAFF**	2
	Free pamphlets	1	**INFORMATION**	1
	Clothes	1	**SUPPLIES**	2
	School Staff	1	**SUPPORT GROUPS**	1
	Support Groups	1		

Table 18

Themes of Actual Methods of Communication Used for Grandparent-Led Households by the Family Resource Center Staff

FRC STAFF	SERVICES AVAILABLE	FREQUENCY	COMMON THEMES	FREQUENCY
FREDA	Fliers	1	**WRITTEN**	3
	Pamphlets	1		
	School newsletters	1	**VERBAL**	1
	Churches	1		
FRANCIS	Parent nights	1	**MEETINGS/CONFERENCES**	2
	Parent-Teacher Conferences	1		
	Information sent home	1	**WRITTEN**	1
TOTAL	Fliers	1	**WRITTEN**	4
	Pamphlets	1	**VERBAL**	1
	School newsletters	1	**MEETINGS/CONFERENCES**	
	Churches	1		2
	Parent nights	1		
	Parent-Teacher Conferences Information Sent Home	1		

Table 19

Additional Comments from FRC Questionnaires

FRC STAFF	DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE COMMUNICATED BY SCHOOL SYSTEM	RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR GRANDPARENTS	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
FREDA	*31 years old *BA in Social Work	Excellent job communicating the importance of attendance. Attendance Awareness Month is designated in the county and special rewards are offered for those with good attendance.	Parent/Grandparent night. Website and telecommunications system. Same services as all parents/guardians.	Changing society has presented a new definition of family. The "norm" of a mom, dad, and two children making up the family dynamics seems to be a thing of the past. Community support systems are more accessible and easily found with the help of technology. Social programs help grandparents feel like they are not alone. A continuum of supports will help grandparents transition back into the role of parenting with more ease and comfort.
FRANCIS	*61 years old *High school diploma	Yes. As far as I know.	Free pamphlets, school supplies, clothes available upon request. The school or Central Office should be able to answer questions or refer them to an agency that can help. Support groups would also help with the stress of raising a grandchild and be able to offer referrals.	No additional comment

Additional Data Collection

In addition to the Skyward Data System, questionnaires and brief interviews from the Family Resource Center staff, teachers, and grandparents, the researcher opted to visit the Family Resource Center to further understand what information is available. This data provided a stronger understanding of the depth of resources available in the county and the ease of which families can obtain support and information. This triangulation of data (i.e., Skyward Data System, questionnaires, brief interviews, and visits to the center) provides a more comprehensive set of data and validates the data collected across all sources for this study. This also provides a higher confidence level in the results of the data mining and increases credibility (Rothbauer, 2008).

There is, indeed, a plethora of pamphlets available at the Family Resource Center for anyone who might have a need for more information concerning issues such as homelessness, appropriate technology use for teenagers, preventing teen pregnancy, the importance of good hygiene, suggested daily schedules for infants up to teenagers, and domestic abuse prevention. The Family Resource Center also publishes a booklet with every social service available in Hawkins County, charitable organizations, and assistance with crisis. The Family Resource Center has a lending library where books about ADHD, anger management, and many other personality and health disorders can be checked out by anyone with a child in the school system. Parenting classes are held once each semester at the Family Resource Center office. The director of the Family Resource Center informed the researcher that she is in constant contact with school counselors concerning issues with children ranging from homelessness to proper hygiene and clothing. She takes pamphlets as well as clothing and personal hygiene products to the schools and sometimes to the homes of students when they are referred by the school counselor. A

support group for grandparents who had assumed custody of their grandchildren met monthly

with a family counselor at the Family Resource Center in 2013-2014, according to the director of

the Family Resource Center, but disbanded when the funding through the Department of Human

Services was cut.

Figure 24. Family Resource Center Pamphlet Library
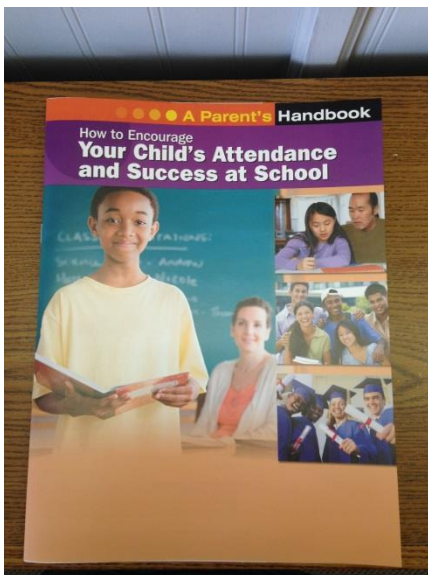
Figure 25. Parents' Handbook Encouraging Attendance
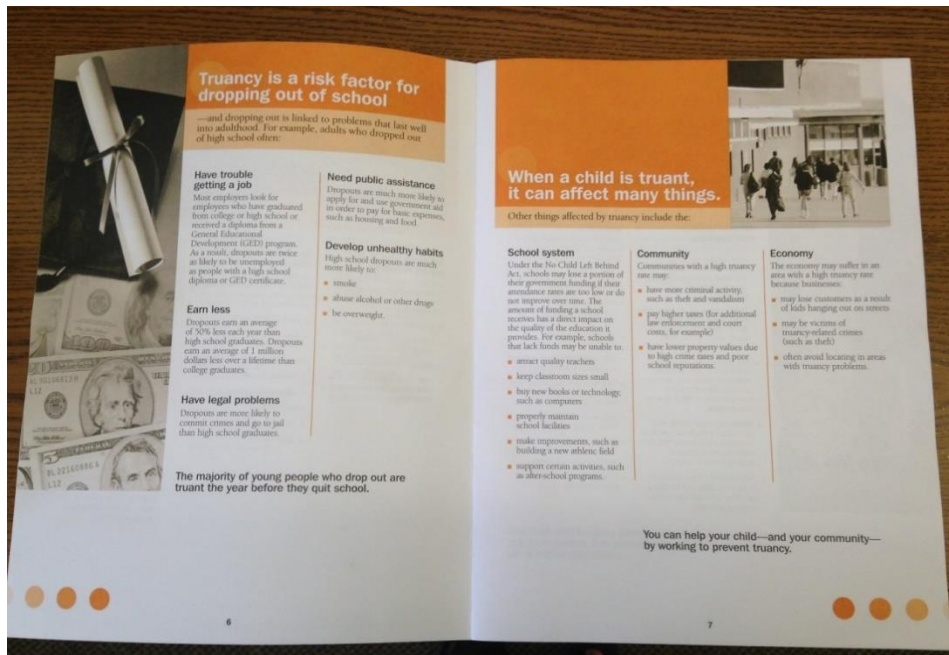
Figure 26. Inside of Booklet on Attendance

This booklet explains what truancy is and how truancy is considered a risk factor for dropping out of school. Information also includes additional information concerning additional risks associated with truancy, and how the parent/guardian is held responsible for truancy issues.

Figure 27. Pamphlets Available at the Family Resource Center
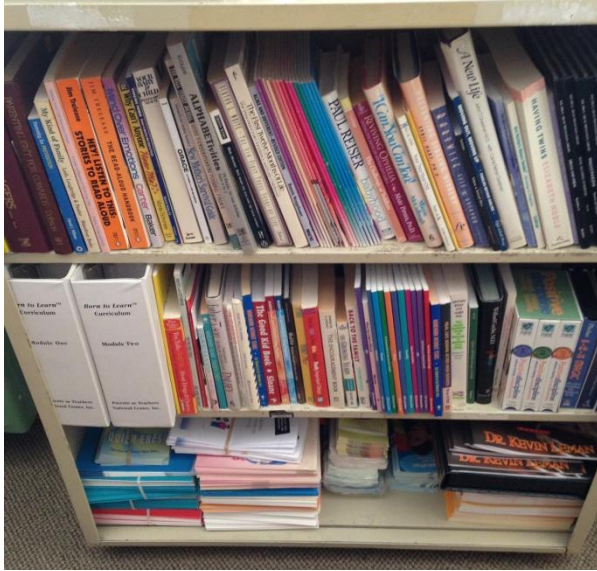
Figure 28. Parents/Guardian Lending Library at the Family Resource Center

Figure 29. Parent/Guardian Lending Library at the Family Resource Center
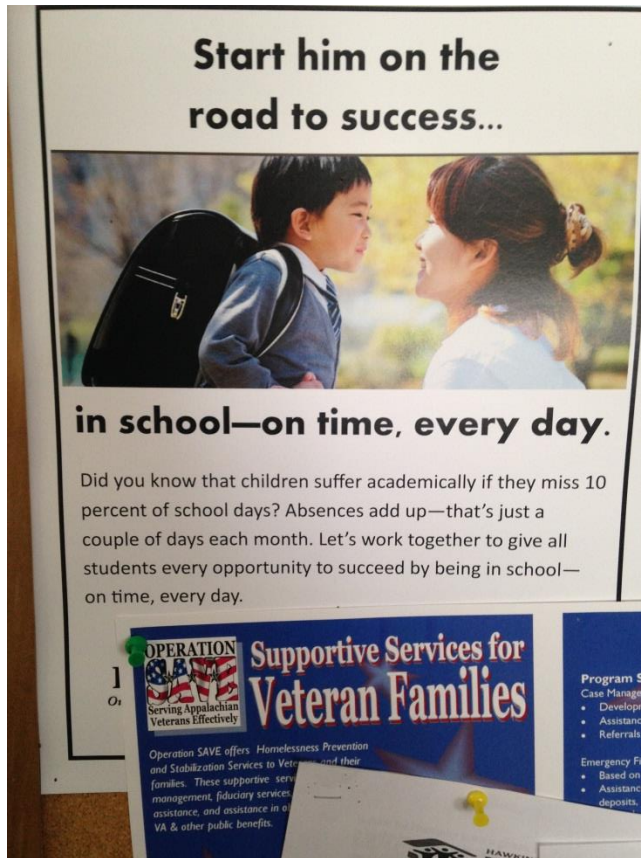
Figure 30. Poster Used in Each School to Encourage Good Attendance

Research Questions and Answers

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine perceptions about the

communication to grandparents raising grandchildren concerning the importance of attendance

as it relates to decreasing chronic early absence. Data analysis from multiple sources included: 1)

collecting parents'/other guardians' and grandparents' demographic data through the Skyward

database; 2) collecting grandparents' demographic data through the researcher-developed

questionnaires; 3) segregation of total pre-k through 3rd grade population into grandparent-led

households and parent/other guardian-led households; 4) eliciting teachers' perceptions

regarding available services for grandparents raising grandchildren; 5) visiting and viewing

available resources at the Family Resource Center; and 6) eliciting Family Resource Center

staff's perceptions of available services for grandparents raising grandchildren. The central research question and subsequent questions were designed to be answered after a thorough analysis of collected data.

Overarching Question

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence. Data related to this question was gathered from this group via questionnaire. None of the grandparents in this group had heard of chronic early absence and when asked what information was shared with them, none of the grandparents in this group mentioned attendance. Refer to Figure 23 for this data. Grandparents were asked two different ways about communication and the subject of communication in the questionnaire. However, as earlier noted, none of the grandparents knew the definition of early chronic absence, and none reported being contacted about attendance or absenteeism.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates. Data related to this question was gathered from this group via questionnaire. There was no difference in the responses of the two grandparent groups. None of the grandparents in this group had heard of chronic early absence and when asked what information was shared with them, none of the grandparents in this group mentioned attendance. Refer to Figure 23 for this data. The researcher would not expect this group to have been contacted regarding absenteeism, as these students had the highest attendance rates in the study groups. However, general knowledge concerning how the school perceives attendance, the importance of attendance, and any system-wide campaign that promotes "good attendance" would be expected if the delivery of information was successful.

Teachers. Data relating to this question was gathered from this group via questionnaire. Tabby was aware of what chronic early absence was and Trena had heard of it but was "not very familiar.' Terry had not heard of early chronic absence. Tabby and Terry

believed the school system was doing a good job of communicating the importance of attendance to grandparents and parents, while Trena did not believe the school system communicated the importance of attendance at all. The researcher acknowledges that the perception of a seasoned teacher and that of a newly-graduated teacher may be different, based on how they were trained, methods of communication used by each teacher, and relationships with students' families. The opinions of each teacher may also be affected by their participation in the system-wide parent/grandparent nights, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Seasoned teachers may also be more aware of services and programs for parents and grandparents than a new teacher. Tables 11-13 represent this data.

Family Resource Center Personnel. Staff from the Family Resource Center participated in the study by answering a questionnaire and being interviewed for clarification. Data to answer this question was gleaned from these questionnaires. Freda was aware of chronic early absence and Francis had not heard of chronic early absence. Both staff members perceived the school system was very effective at communicating the importance of attendance, and mentioned various delivery methods, such as flyers, school-sponsored events, parent/teacher conferences, and special parent/grandparent nights to encourage participation in school events. The researcher acknowledges that the Family Resource Center staff would have an intimate knowledge of communicating to the school population, as that is one of the primary services of the Family Resource Center. However, the researcher was unable to collect data about specific populations served by the Family Resource Center because the center does not collect that type of demographic information. Demographic information of the families serviced by the Family Resource

129

Center would be useful for future studies concerning this population. Table 16 represents common themes of perceived available services by the Family Resource Center staff.

Documentation. The researcher was able to visit the Family Resource Center and view pamphlets and booklets available to all families in the school system that promoted and encouraged attendance (see Figures 24-30). These photos represent five book cases filled with pamphlets, flyers, and booklets concerning truancy, attendance, drug abuse, and other school-related issues that may be of interest to parents or guardians and a poster affixed to a cork board for information. None of these are marketed specifically to grandparents, and, as seen in Figure 25, some are specifically marketed to "parents".

Cross-Case Analysis. This data suggests that there is, indeed, a disconnect in the perceptions of personnel concerning communication and the perceptions of grandparent-led households. This data further supports the researcher's perception despite a year-long campaign to reduce CEA, 1/3 of the teachers and ½ the FRC staff had not heard of it, and even those who had heard it were not exactly sure what it is. While school personnel (4 out of 5) thought that the school was doing a good job communicating the importance of attendance, none of the grandparents knew what CEA was, and none reported being informed about the importance of attendance. While there is a plethora of pamphlets, flyers, booklets, and books on many subjects, including attendance, available at the Family Resource Center, there is no way to know if grandparents receive this information or if they are aware of what is available at the Family Resource Center. Further data collection by the Family Resource Center concerning referrals, types of communication, methods of delivery of information, and demographics would be beneficial to understanding communication methods and delivery of services to this population.

Question 1:

What types of information are communicated to custodial grandparents regarding the education of their grandchildren?

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence. Grandparents in this group noted that they were most often informed about events, such as Family Night, school-wide concerts, field day, or book fair. This was the theme for both groups of grandparents, and supports the researcher's perception that the school system has not successfully communicated the importance of attendance in early grades, nor has the school system explained the negative consequences of chronic early absence. The researcher acknowledges that the school system does use a phone system that calls every household where a student resides that is enrolled in the county school system. This information is typically reminding the household of picture days, snow days, cafeteria charges that need to be paid, and alerting the household that a student missed a day or class at school, which may have affected the responses to this question. It should be noted, however, that only one grandparent said she was contacted about her grandchild missing school, but only as that related to getting homework. Table 8 represents this data.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates, As noted earlier, both groups of grandparents had a common theme of communication concerning events. While this group with high attendance would not receive automated phone calls alerting them of a day's absence for their grandchild, the researcher's perception is that all stake holders in the child's life should be aware of the importance of attendance, and be supported with this information by the school system. Table 8 represent this data.

Teachers, The three teachers who participated sent home daily communications with their students via a folder placed in their backpacks in the afternoon and taken out each morning. The teachers' assistants in each classroom were responsible for transferring the information into and out of the folders and backpacks each day. This delivery of information was mostly reminding the families about events and other information that the school needed them to share, such as cafeteria charges, returning a library book, or an event in the near future. None of the grandparents reported receiving information in this manner. Also, preschool teachers typically share daily behavior information with parents and grandparents via a note. These teachers are no exception, as the researcher observed these notes, as well as the teachers talking face-to-face with the families in the car line. Table 13 represents this data.

Family Resource Center Personnel. The Family Resource Center shared a plethora of information that is available at their office for anyone in the school system. As noted earlier, most of the information is shared via pamphlet and flyer to each of the schools, and much of the information goes through the school counselor. Many of the pamphlets and books available do offer resources and guides to help grandparents support their grandchild's education. However, as noted above, there is no data collected concerning the type of referral, information given, or demographics of the families served. Figures 24-29 represent this data.

Cross-Case Analysis. From both groups of grandparents' points of view, the school system communicates with them concerning events. The majority of teachers and both Family Resource Center Personnel have a different perception, however. This data reflects either a disconnect or a misconception of information from either side. Perhaps

132

the grandparents do receive information on chronic early absence and the importance of attendance, but either do not remember or did not have time to read the information. Perhaps the teachers and Family Resource Center personnel are aware of many services and vehicles for delivery of information and assume that anyone in the school system should be able to seek out and find support services if they need them. There are many variables to this, especially in such a small study group. However, the data suggests that improvements can be made by both parties.

Sub-question 1a. Is the importance of school attendance communicated to custodial grandparents? If so, how?

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence were asked this question. Neither group of grandparents noted that they were contacted concerning school attendance or the importance of school attendance. Based on their preferred method of communication, a letter/note/flyer or phone call would be considered an appropriate delivery of information. Table 5 represents this data. However, a family with a child that has chronic early absence should be receiving phone calls each day of absence to report the absence to the household, as is school-wide policy. Again, many variables may contribute to the apparent lack of knowledge by grandparents concerning attendance, such as not answering the phone, not reading notes, etc. The data did not reveal this was the case in this particular study based on the data collected from the questionnaires completed by the grandparents, but it would be a good area of focus for future interventions/studies.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates were asked this question. As noted earlier, a common theme with both sets of grandparents was neither group received information concerning the importance of attendance. This group, however, has high attendance

133

rates, and all grandparents noted attendance was "important" to them. It is not evident from this data that the grandparents' opinion of attendance as being "important" is directly influenced in any way by the school system campaign on chronic early absence; by a teacher, school counselor, or any other school personnel, as none of the participants mentioned the importance of attendance as something about which they received information.

Teachers were asked this question. Two of the teachers believed the importance of attendance was communicated to the families. One of these teachers even described the delivery of information as "excellent". One teacher said she was not aware that the school system communicated the importance of attendance with anyone. There is also the possibility that because two of these teachers are located at a different school, the principal may handle delivery of information differently at each location. Table 14 represents this data.

Family Resource Center Personnel were asked this question. The Family Resource Center Personnel offered a great amount of data concerning resources available and methods of delivery of information. What was not clear was the specific population that utilized this service. When asked about the specific population that typically utilized the services, the director of the Family Resource Center replied that no certain population was targeted. The services are given freely to anyone who has a child in the school system, regardless of socioeconomic status. The researcher was shown the paperwork that a family must fill out to receive services, such as the food pantry and clothing, and it collected only very basic data (e.g., the name of the parent or grandparent, address, phone number, child(ren)'s names and identity of what school they attend). The Family Resource Center does not keep records concerning the demographics of families who

receive pamphlets or referrals. For this reason, there is no data to indicate that grandparents receive information concerning the importance of attendance from the Family Resource Center.

Documentation available at the Family Resource Center may improve chronic early absence if it was distributed in a meaningful way. As noted earlier, because the Family Resource Center does not collect specific demographic data on the families it serves, the researcher has no way of knowing who the recipients of the pamphlets, flyers, booklets, and books are. A specific campaign focusing on attendance and reducing or preventing chronic early absence, such as the one the school system endorsed in 2012-2013, may have been an opportunity to target this population, especially those who met the criteria of CEA.

Cross-Case Analysis of groups provided the following outcomes. One of the grandparents' responses indicated that the importance of school attendance was communicated to them. Two teachers and the staff of the Family Resource Center did believe the importance of school attendance was communicated to custodial grandparents. There was no data to confirm the teacher's opinions or the Family Resource Center referrals and distribution of information. However, on personal inspection, the researcher did observe pamphlets, booklets, books, and flyers at the Family Resource Center concerning the importance of attendance. See Figures 24-30.

Sub-question 1b. Are there differences in views on the importance of attendance between custodial grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence were asked this question. This group noted that attendance was important to them, but also clarified that by stating that the grandchildren with chronic early absences were often sick. This explanation of the grandchildren being sick may be considered an admittance that the grandchildren are absent from school an extraordinary amount of time, but because they are "sick," it is acceptable. One grandparent noted that she took her grandchild to the doctor when she was sick, so she had doctor's notes. Tables 3 and 4 represent this data. While this makes the absences "excused" based on school policy, the educational ramifications of being absent 10% or more of the total possible days are clearly noted in the Chang and Romero (2008) study of chronic early absence. Of interest, however, is the fact that all families with CEA indicated that illness was a problem, which may suggest a focus on interventions with health-related issues may be beneficial to this population.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates were asked this question. As noted above, this group shared the same common theme concerning their opinion of school attendance, which was "important." One could assume that this group truly believes this because their grandchildren have excellent attendance rates. For future studies, the researcher would like to collect data concerning the work attendance of these grandparents to see if they also have excellent attendance, and also the work attendance of the grandparent-led households with grandchildren who have chronic early absence. A comparison of the adults' attendance as compared to the grandchildren's attendance may have correlations that contribute to this body of research. Additionally, it would be important to investigate where the importance of attendance is coming from. Is this a belief primarily of the students themselves, or the grandparents, or the teachers and other school personnel, or some combination?

Teachers were asked this question. All three teachers believed that grandparents were equally concerned about the importance of attendance as parents/other guardians. One teacher noted that she believed the grandparent-led households were even more concerned about the grandchildren's education and attendance because of the circumstances that put the grandchildren in their care. See Table 14 for this data.

Cross-Case Analysis of groups provided the following analysis. Responses from both groups of grandparents indicated that the entire group believed attendance was important, a belief that is evident in the group with high attendance. The variable with the attendance of both groups appears to be sickness, based on the common themes identified with the grandparent-led families with chronic early absence. Sickness was an issue with all of the students in the CEA group and none in the HA group. Figures 3 and 4 represent this data.

Question 2: What methods of communication do the school system use with custodial grandparents, and what methods of communication are preferred by custodial grandparents?

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence. This group identified notes and phone calls as their preferred method of communication and the school system personnel uses a combination of notes and phone calls to relay information. As stated earlier, based on similar preferred methods of communication, if the school system does communicate the importance of attendance with families, the delivery methods being utilized should be sufficient to successfully share information with this population. However, there seems to be some type of breakdown in the system for this group when it comes to conveying the importance of attendance.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates. This group shared a common theme of written communication with the grandparent-led households with chronic early absence. However, this group was also comfortable using technology and owned smartphones, which may assist them in obtaining information from the school's website even though this group did not mention using technology for information. While some of the grandparents mentioned phone calls, which was coded as verbal communication, the majority preferred written communication, which was the theme developed through coding. One grandparent noted that she liked to post the information so she would not forget. Table 7 represents this data.

Teachers. The teachers believed that grandparents and parents preferred notes and phone calls primarily, and for this reason, two of the teachers utilized these methods of delivery of information. Based on this data, the researcher can make the assumption that the school system is providing information via the preferred methods of communication. However, data does not indicate exactly what information is being shared by the school system, only the information that the grandparents reported receiving in each group.

Family Resource Center Personnel. The Family Resource Center Personnel utilized flyers, pamphlets, and school events as their primary source of communication. Based on the data provided by the grandparents, both groups agreed that they did receive information concerning events, which would support data from the Family Resource Center as well as the methods of delivery of information being utilized. While there were only two families who utilized services provided by the Family Resource Center, it was not clear if the other families did not know about services offered or if they chose not to accept services.

Cross-Case Analysis. Data from this research study indicates that the preferred methods of delivery of information is common among the school system and grandparents. While there is

no direct data indicating that the Family Resource Center was successful in communication with grandparents concerning events, both groups noted that they received information concerning events. For that reason, the researcher can determine that preferred methods are successful in this particular subject. However, as stated previously, it is not clear if the families were aware of the services offered by the Family Resource Center or if they chose not to participate in the services. Based on the coded data, (see Table 6 and Table 7) if the preferred methods of communication are used, then it should be able to be effective in communicating the importance of attendance. This population may benefit from future interventions that may examine the disconnect in communicant the importance of preventing chronic early absence,

Sub-Question 2a: What differences are there between the communication methods used by the school system with grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?

Grandparent-Led Families with Chronic Early Absence were asked this question. Based on the data received from this group and the group with high attendance rates, there is no difference in the methods of communication being utilized by the school system. Table 6 represents this data. Data also reflects that there is no differentiation in providing any type of information to any particular population in the school system. For that reason, it is reasonable to determine that grandparents as primary caregivers are not considered to be an at-risk population and that there are not special or specific methods of communication used to ensure that the at-risk populations have an opportunity to receive support and services in the school system. Additionally, most of the responses from school personnel have mentioned *parent*-teacher conferences, *parent* nights, *parent* pamphlets, etc. (See Table 13). This use of the word *parent* in lieu of "family" or "guardian" may

disenfranchise grandparents and make them feel in some way is if this event or information is not for them. A more general term may be more appropriate to increase participation and inclusion into the school system.

Grandparent-Led Families with High Attendance Rates were asked this question. As stated earlier, based on data received from both grandparent groups, there is no difference in the methods of communication being utilized by the school system. Table 6 represents this data. For this reason, the researcher cannot assume that communication by the school system prompted the families with high attendance rates to meet that criterion. There is, perhaps, an intrinsic desire by the grandparents to give the grandchild every opportunity to succeed and they all reported that they believed school attendance was "important." The families in this group also did not report health issues with their grandchildren, which was the sole reason for absences in the group with chronic early absence. Many factors can contribute to health and wellbeing, but none of those were the focus in this study. Another variable is that the HA group may have better access to technology and smart phones thereby getting additional communication/information.

Teachers were asked this question. None of the participating teachers indicated that they used different methods of communication for each study group. The teacher's common theme of notes/flyers was also a common theme among both grandparent groups. Tables 6 and 7 represent this data. This is also an indication that there is little or no differentiation when dealing with different populations in the school system. The overall preferred method of communication for each teacher seems to be based on preference and no strategic planning on their part. It may be beneficial to this population to pursue

further study to determine if a strategic method of communication would improve attendance.

Family Resource Center Personnel were also asked this question. The Family Resource Center personnel indicated by the lack of demographical information collected on clients that the information they disperse is not specific or tailored to any specific group or population. Therefore, no differences can be determined to exist between the two groups of grandparents. While not a part of the research in this study, the researcher would be interested to see if information that was strategically targeted to these groups would make a difference in attendance and other issues related to education. A more detailed method of record keeping by the Family Resource Center may benefit the school system in determining who utilizes services, who does not utilize services, and identify any groups that may require further assistance not currently provided by the Family Resource Center.

Cross-Case Analysis of the groups was used for analysis. All of the participants reported similar methods of communication for every population in school. There were no specialized methods of delivery tailored to reach any particular population. For that reason, the researcher can determine that there is no difference in the communication methods between grandparents with chronic early absence and grandparents with high attendance. As previously stated, further research may determine that specifically targeted communication may improve services to this population, and may reduce chronic early absence. The use of the word *"parent"* when referring to conferences, parent nights, parent pamphlets, etc. (See Table 13), in lieu of "family" or "guardian" may be a stumbling block for grandparents. Further research concerning the wording used in communication may benefit this population.

Sub-Question 2b: What differences are there between the communication methods preferred by grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?

Grandparent Led Families with Chronic Early Absence and Grandparent Led Families with High Attendance. Both groups of grandparents had the common theme of written communication. Table 7 represents this data. Two preferred verbal communication, but it was not used often by the teachers or at all by the Family Resource Center staff. Also, none of the grandparents in either group preferred technological communication, as in text messaging, email, or other social media. There may be financial reasons why some in this population do not have smartphones (expensive to purchase and pay monthly fees) or there may be a significant learning curve. If the latter were found to be true through further research, the researcher would recommend additional services by the Family Resource Center or technology department that would provide technical training to grandparents, guardians, or parents who may not be comfortable with various methods of technology in an effort to improve communication between the two.

Cross-Case Analysis of the groups was used for analysis of data. There were no coded differences in the data from the grandparent led households with chronic early absence and grandparent led households with high attendance. Therefore, a reasonable assumption can be made that there are no differences in preferred communication methods between the groups. However, there are limitations to this assumption. Financial barriers may prevent this population from utilizing technology or the population may not be able to or want to learn how to use a computer or a smartphone. Four out of five grandparents with students who have chronic early absence either did not answer the question concerning their comfort level using a computer

142

(which may suggest they are not comfortable using a computer) or replied that they were not

comfortable using a computer. Half (2 out of 4) of the grandparents of students with high

attendance stated that they were not comfortable using a computer. See Figure 20 for this

information. The researcher suggests that if further research determines a desire to learn but a

lack of available training is the barrier to technology-based communication, the Family Resource

Center or technology department may benefit this population by providing training on use of

email, smartphones, texting, etc.

Question 3: What services and information do the custodial grandparents deem as

most important to their ability to support the education of their grandchildren?

Grandparent-Led Families. The common theme of services and information between

both groups of grandparents that actually answered that question on the questionnaire was

support. Two grandparents did not answer the question or simply stated that they had no idea.

The lack of a reply constitutes that the families may not be aware of services that could help

them in raising their grandchildren and supporting their education. This could indicate that the

communication methods being used by those who provide support and services is not working or

that the grandparents are not seeking assistance with support and services.

Teachers: The teachers were asked a similar question that revealed that none of the

teachers were aware of specific services available or deemed as important by grandparents.

Tabby was not sure of any services, Terry noted that the same services were available for all

families in the school system, and Trena said there are various resources available to guardians.

See Table 17 for this data. None of these replies gives a clear understanding of services available

and specifically no knowledge or understanding of special interventions, services, or means of

communication to the grandparent population. This population may benefit from specific

143

trainings and materials in the future to help them communicate with and support the grandparent population more effectively.

Family Resource Center Staff: The Family Resource Center staff had much more detailed responses to supporting questions concerning services and information deemed important to the grandparents in helping them support their grandchild's education. See Tables 15, 16 and 17 for this information. This is not surprising data considering the Family Resource Center is a rich source of information, mainly in the form of pamphlets, support groups, and referral services. However, none of the services discussed with either staff member were specifically tailored to custodial grandparents, or was the pamphlets concerning absenteeism or truancy.

Cross-Case Analysis of the groups was used for analysis. Both grandparent groups had common themes of support and also a majority in both groups that either did not answer the question at all or responded "don't know". However, this data is cause for concern because if a grandparent is unable to determine what services and information would be important to their ability to support the education of their grandchildren, how would the school system be able to offer support? If the school system cannot identify services that grandparents or parents deem as important to support education, then it is reasonable to assume that random information is being shared throughout the school system with the hope of reaching someone who may need it.

The teachers were very vague in their answers to the question, and this suggests that they may be aware of services in the system, but none specifically tailored to custodial grandparents. While the teachers have the opportunity to communicate with the grandparents on a more regular basis than other school system personnel, the data suggests that they do not make any special effort or contingency to reach out to the grandparents. This population may benefit from training

to learn the specific services available in the community and the school system, as well as what the grandparents may deem as important to their ability to support their grandchild's education. There appears to be no direct line of communication focused on particular populations that may improve the wellbeing of the family, and thus, improving attendance levels in the households that met the criteria of chronic early absence.

Sub-Question 3a: What differences are there between the services and information deemed as most important by grandparents with students who have chronic early absence vs. students with good attendance?

Grandparent-Led Families were asked this question. Both groups indicated a common theme of homework as the services and information deemed as most important by those who answered the questions as well as tangible resources such as clothes and food. Participants in both groups chose not to answer the question or stated that they had no idea. Again, the lack of a response and the statement that "they had no idea" is an indication that this population may not know what services would help them, and who or how to ask for services and support.

Table 8 reflects the information grandparents in both groups revealed as the communication received from the school. Grandparents with students who have chronic early absence were equally informed about events/trips/conferences/meetings and homework. Only one was contacted about attendance. This data suggests that even though these families have chronic early absence and the school system focused on attendance during the 2012 school year, there was a disconnect in communication.

Families with high attendance rates noted that they received information about events/trips/conferences/meetings and two also noted receiving information about buying stuff, which was coded as "money". Of course, the researcher recognizes that they would not be

145

contacted in the same capacity about attendance as those families who have chronic early absence. However, if the theme and focus of the school system was to encourage attendance and promote the decrease of chronic early absence, the researcher projects that there should have been a clear line of communication to each family in the school system promoting attendance and that should have been reflected in the data.

Cross-Case Analysis of the groups was used to provide the following data. As stated in the previous analysis, the lack of an answer or inability to identify a service or information to help support the grandchild's education is cause for further study to help identify services and information that will support these families. This data also indicates that the group of grandparents with grandchildren who have early chronic absence do not identify chronic early absence as being a subject that needs support, services, or information. The data revealed that grandparents did not know what chronic early absence was (see Figure 23), so it is reasonable to assume that because grandparents do not know that chronic early absence is a considerable risk factor that they would not identify absence as an issue needing support or information. If this is true, then it can be determined that the school system has not been successful in communicating the importance of attendance to decrease chronic early absence.

Question 4: What do elementary school counselors, the director of the Family Resource Center, and the assistant of the Family Resource Center think are the most needed services and most effective methods of communication concerning the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren?

Family Resource Center Personnel. Elementary school counselors did not participate in this study. Family Resource Center Personnel, however, indicated support with school supplies, clothing, physical and emotional support groups, assistance with technology, and food were

important to support the grandparent-led household. The director of the Family Resource Center also noted that workshops for grandparents to help support their grandchildren stay on grade level were important.

Teachers. Three teachers were asked to participate in this study due to the elementary school counselors not consenting to participate. The data gleaned from the teacher interviews revealed that teachers' perceptions of risk factors in the grandparent-led families were similar (see Table 12). The overall themes of risk factors in the teacher interviews were traumatic event (cause for change in household), rejection, and guidance. This data suggests that in the classroom, teachers are probably aware of the reasons for a child to be removed from the parents and placed with grandparents and most of the time, the reasons are due to a traumatic event that may have long-lasting repercussions in the child's life. Terry noted that the children may have feelings of rejection, and that may also impact physical and mental wellbeing.

The teachers also revealed that they use written communication more than verbal (see Table 13). No technological communication was mentioned. This does agree with the method that most grandparents prefer (see Table 7).

Cross-Case Analysis: Both staff members at the Family Resource Center indicated similar support services and information they deemed as important for the grandparents to be able to support the grandchild's education. These common themes, however, did not match what either of the grandparent groups identified as being important services and information, with the one exception of food. This data indicates that school personnel may have a rich assortment of information and services available, but grandparents either do know about the services, who to ask for more information, or they are not certain of what they need to do or have to support their grandchildren's education. Both groups of grandparents had participants who noted that they did

147

not have a relationship with the Family Resource Center and all of the participants in the grandparent groups reported no relationship with school counselors. Both of these school personnel have been identified through this data collection as being key stake-holders in communication with parents and grandparents in the school system. If the grandparents do not have a relationship with either of these, it is a reasonable assumption to believe that grandparents in either group are not receiving information or services that could help in the support of their grandchild's education and, of most interest to this study, not receiving information concerning the importance of attendance and support to decrease chronic early absence. Given that most of the grandparents indicated having a good or friendly relationship with the teachers, or at the very least talking to the teachers "a lot", it might be indicative of a need to have teachers be the first line of information about the importance of attendance and also about services that are available. As mentioned earlier, the teachers may require training to learn about the services available to be able to support the grandparent population as well as preferred methods of communication and preferred support.

The addition of the teachers to the study in lieu of the school counselors added a deeper understanding of how grandparents communicate with the classroom and what information each group deems is most common. Written communication was the most preferred method in the teacher groups and the grandparent groups, so this would be considered positive or beneficial data. However, the types of information that both groups of grandparents reported receiving did not reflect any type of communication about attendance or the importance of attendance, with the exception of one grandparent who noted she was contacted about her grandchild's absences.

Sub-Question 4a: Are there differences between the views of school staff/personnel and custodial grandparents related to perceived needs, services, and information?

Areas of agreement were as follows: Data from both the school staff/personnel and custodial grandparents was in agreement about the following:

1) The common theme of preferred methods of communication was written for all participants in the study;

2) Teachers and grandparents reported having "good" relationships;

3) Both grandparent groups and teachers agree that attendance is "important";

4) The Family Resource Center and both groups of grandparents agreed that information concerning events was shared and received;

5) There is no difference in the methods of communication utilized by the school system to either group of grandparents.

Areas of disagreement were as follows: 1) While the school system data revealed that a year-long campaign promoting the importance of attendance was implemented, neither group of grandparents reported receiving any information concerning attendance or chronic early absence. One Family Resource Center staff member, one teacher, and all of the grandparents reported that they did not know what chronic early absence was although the school system implemented a year-long campaign. Freda, the Family Resource Center Director had heard of chronic early absence and Tabby, a preschool teacher, had heard the term "chronic early absence" but reported she did not know much about it.

2) Grandparents in both groups reported that they were most often informed about events, not about the importance of attendance. However, two of the three teachers reported that they believed the school system did a very good job of communicating attendance, while one did not believe they communicated effectively; the staff at the Family Resource Center also believed the school system did a good job of communicating the importance of attendance.

3) While the Family Resource Center has a rich inventory of information and services, two grandparents in both groups reported having a relationship with the school service, and the balance of the groups did not have a relationship with the Family Resource Center. The Family Resource Center could not provide demographics on the families they have served, so determining if the Family Resource Center was successful in the communication methods utilized was not possible. Only the data from the grandparents in this study can be used to determine effective communication with the Family Resource Center.

4) The school system has a system-wide policy concerning the utilization of the automated phone system to contact grandparents, parents, and other guardians about their student missing a day or a class period at school. Only one grandparent mentioned receiving a phone call about absences and that was only concerning homework. None of the other grandparent participants reported receiving any phone calls about attendance. Also, the grandparent-led families with CEA did not seem worried about attendance as long as they had a doctor's note;

5) Data from Family Resource Center staff questionnaires revealed that the services and information they deemed as important for grandparent-led households to receive (informational pamphlets, lending library, and support groups) did not agree with the services and information the grandparent groups deemed as important (help with homework, information about events/trips/conferences/meetings).

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the preliminary analysis, statistical analysis, coded themes, and in-depth demographic data relevant to this study. This chapter also presented participant-specific data that supported the research questions as well as cross-case analysis of the data findings.

Chapter 5 will include a summary of the study, discussion findings, conclusions,

recommendations for further research, and study limitations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study's Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods, primarily qualitative study was to examine the level and delivery of information and services offered to grandparents who have become the primary caregivers of pre-k through third grade students and determine if the information and services are effective in decreasing chronic early absence (CEA), defined by Chang and Romero (2008) as missing 10% or more of the school year. Additionally, the study examined grandparents , teachers, and Family Resource Center personnel's perceptions about services needed by grandparents raising grandchildren and whether this is an at-risk population with regards to CEA. Creswell (2009) notes that qualitative data analysis includes the building of patterns, categories and themes through the organization of data into increasingly abstract units of information. Two groups of grandparents were surveyed using research-developed open-ended interviews and the school system's database of information (Skyward). One group of grandparents ($n = 5$) had grandchildren who met the criteria of chronic early absence. The other group of grandparents ($n = 4$) had grandchildren with attendance rates in the top 5% of the school system. Additionally, three teachers in the school system, and two Family Resource Center employees were surveyed about delivery of school-related information, services available to grandparents, and general knowledge of chronic early absence.

Summary of Findings

This study explored the perceptions and beliefs of 9 grandparents raising grandchildren, three elementary grade teachers, and two Family Resource Center staff members. A cross-case analysis resulted in the comparison of grandparents with grandchildren who have chronic early

absence as defined by Chang and Romero (2008) and grandparents with grandchildren who have attendance rates within the highest 5% of grades pre-k through 3rd. Themes that emerged from coding the data of the grandparent surveys involving included: 1)no knowledge or understanding of "chronic early absence"; 2) desire for help with homework; 3) excessive absences due to sickness of students; 4) majority of grandparent-led households are at poverty-level; 5) majority of grandparent-led households have no education beyond a high school diploma; 6) families with both grandparents in the home have higher attendance rates than families with only one grandparent in the home; 7) majority of single-grandparent households are single grandmothers; 8) majority of grandparents own a cell phone; 9) none of the grandparent participants used technology as a means of communication with the school system; 10) most preferred way to communicate with grandparents in both groups was written 11) none of the grandparents had a relationship with a school counselor; 12) grandparents in both groups believed they had a "good" relationship with the teacher; 13) 22% of grandparents were aware of the services available at the Family Resource Center; and 14) all of the grandparents believed attendance was important. One unexpected finding which emerged during the data collection process was the frequency of no responses to questions about relationships with counselors and the Family Resource Center in both groups, no responses concerning the grandparents comfort level using a computer in the group with a high rate of absences, and significantly high disciplinary actions against grandchildren with high attendance.

Socioeconomic Status

Hairston's (2009) report concerning kinship care when parents are incarcerated revealed that families who assume care of children are often living with incomes less than 100% of the federal poverty level and are relatively unable to receive support services and monetary support,

such as food stamps, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Data collected concerning socioeconomic status of grandparents raising grandchildren in this study supports Hairston's research as the majorities in both grandparent groups meet or exceed the federal poverty guidelines. The socioeconomic status also relates to Erikson's ego integrity vs. despair phase of development if the grandparent assuming primary responsibility suddenly finds his or her lifestyle disrupted while on a fixed income and a newly acquired expense of a dependent (1968).

Perceived Services

Bronfenbrenner (1997: 1995) discussed the exosystem as an indirect influence on the child. Grandparents can choose to participate in services meant to support the family unit or choose not to use them. Bowers and Myers (1999) and Goldberg-Glen (2000) reported that lack of social-support undermines parenting practices and negatively affects caregiver-child relationships. Goldberg-Glen (2000) also noted that research reflects that many of the grandparents placed in the position of become primary caregiver simply do not know how to navigate the courts system or what types of help they are able to ask for when they become primary caregiver. This appears to be the case in this study, as few grandparents knew about or utilized the Family Resource Center, had relationships with school counselors, and the majority could not think of services they perceived as being supportive of their grandchildren's education.

Educational Level of Grandparents

Geen (2004) found that many kinship foster caregivers are significantly more likely to be older, have low educational attainment, live in poverty, and are more at-risk of poor health than non-kinship caregivers. Grandparents in both groups of this study did not have an educational level above high school, with the exception of one grandparent who had some college, and the

majority of both groups met or exceeded the federal poverty guidelines. While this study did not

delve into the health of the grandparents, Geen's (2004) other findings were supported by the

data.

Use of Technology

One conjecture of this study was that grandparents may struggle with the use of

technology, and it may be a barrier to school-grandparent communication. Analysis of the data

found that while many of the grandparents had a computer at home and owned a cell phone, they

did not use either mediums for communication with the school system. There were differences in

the ownership, comfort, and use between the CEA and HA groups. Even though grandparents

did not mention technology as a preferred method, this may be a barrier to communication as

school move more and more into the digital age. The HA grandparents may be easier to get in

touch with or are unknowlingly getting more information because they have a greater number of

channels on which to receive that information.

Disciplinary Data

An unexpected piece of data emerged from the Skyward database concerning disciplinary

actions against grandchildren being raised by grandparents. Grandparent-led families with high

attendance rates had grandchildren with the highest number of disciplinary actions in the

database and were also the only group that had parental involvement in the child's life and

education (although there is no way of knowing whether this is a factor or just a coincidence).

Dunham et al. (1988) suggested that causes of stress for children can be face-to-face meetings

with parents, or random phone calls, which may cause children to become upset and have mental

stress, may also show anger more quickly, not obey grandparents, or develop guilt feelings

concerning the parents. As noted, this is one possible explanation for the higher number of disciplinary actions, or it may be unrelated.

Recommendations for Future Research

Analysis of the data served to answer the research questions posed; demographic data available on the Skyward database prompted the researcher to delve into areas slightly outside the scope of the research questions. Stenius, Makela, Miovsky, & Bagrhelik (2008), suggest increased curiosity in topics or aspects related to the research is a common outcome of any research study. Based on findings of the data analysis, current literature and study limitations, several recommendations for future study should be examined:

1. The local school system may perceive the methods of communication concerning chronic early absence as sufficient or "good". However, grandparents were not aware of what chronic early absence is and did not mention any communication concerning the importance of attendance. Engaging stake holders in the communications process and what information is communicated would benefit both parties.

2. Sickness was noted as the reason for all of the absences in the group of grandparents with grandchildren who have chronic early absence. Further research into the health of this population of children may be useful for future interventions to reduce chronic early absence. The health of the grandparents is also an issue, based on research from Sands & Goldberg-Glen (1998), Minkler and Fuller-Thomson (1999), Inwood (2002), Helson, & Wink (1992), Helson and Moane (1987), Grinstead, Leder, Jensen, and Bond (2003), and Butler & Zakari (2005).

3. The literature review was sparse concerning information about how children are affected by the transition to the grandparents' home. Very little information is

156

available concerning the physical and mental health, academic status, and social activity of children being raised by grandparents. A longitudinal study of this population may be beneficial in shining a greater light on the characteristics and needs of what appears to be, by this study, an at-risk population.

4. A study analyzing student data achievement may be beneficial to understanding if this population is indeed "at-risk" for academic delays or failures due to transitions, sickness, and poor attendance.

5. Results from data analysis revealed a significant difference in some outcomes for students who had both grandparents in the home, as opposed to having a single grandparent. Further research on this demographic may provide additional information substantial to this population and school system services.

6. A demographic study of the frequency of disciplinary actions against students raised by grandparents may offer significant information concerning wellbeing and stress in the student, as the grandparent group with high attendance rates had 7 times more disciplinary actions in the data base than the CEA grandparent group.

Recommendations for Administrators and Teachers

1. Successful delivery of information concerning chronic early absence may improve attendance rates in families that are considered high risk. Utilizing the communication methods that at-risk populations prefer may improve communication and, thus, reduce chronic early absence.

2. Professional development concerning the preferences and stated needs of this population may assist teachers in providing support to the students as well as the

grandparents. An awareness of the risks associated with this group revealed in the literature review may benefit students, grandparents, and teachers.

3. Based on data from the grandparent groups, homework support offered when the grandparents deem convenient or appropriate may help improve student outcomes and relieve grandparent stress.

4. Changing wordage from "parent" to "family" or "guardian" in school-to-home communications may also help grandparents feel included and recognized as an integral part of the child's education.

Recommendations for Grandparents

1. Grandparents may benefit from learning what services are available in their local school system. Sometimes that may involve stepping out of their comfort zone, asking questions, or seeking support through public assistance programs.

2. Grandparents may benefit from seeking medical support for children with chronic illnesses, as well as communicating with teachers and school nurses about health issues, triggers, etc. that may contribute to chronic early absence.

Recommendations for Policymakers

1. As a population that can have significant risk factors that impact occupation, socioeconomic status, educational achievement, and overall mental and physical health of both grandparents and grandchildren, policymakers should take into consideration possible reasons for the growth in this population and identify programs and services that will support the family unit during transition and throughout the school years.

2. Financial support in the way of public assistance offered to grandparents placed in the custodial role may prevent stress and health issues that impact both grandparents and grandchildren, as the literature review noted was a significant issue among this population.

Study Limitations

When conducting research using qualitative methods and within a school setting, scheduling conflicts, desire to participate, and even weather may impact the research plan. As with any research study, flaws exist. This study is no exception, and certain limitations may affect study outcomes. Limitations of this research include, but are not restricted to:

1. *Human variation-* As this was a study based on participant perception, each participant's responses are unique and may or may not reflect the reality of the situation. Experiences, primary reasons for the change in custody of the grandchild, family dynamics, school interactions, are all viewed through the perceptions and memories of the grandparents and school personnel interviewed.

2. *Size of study group-* A larger test group would provide data that is more representative of the general population. This study had 9 grandparent participants, three teachers, and two Family Resource Center staff members. The small sample size and limited geographic radius limit the generalizability of results.

3. *Participant selection and participation* - Not all of the intended participants of this study were willing to contribute to the research. Three school counselors were asked to participate via email, letter, phone call, and personal visit. None replied to any method of communication and were not available when the researcher went to their schools. Their input may have offered additional information that impacted outcomes

159

of this study. Also, the original intent was to have 10 grandparent participants. However, the researcher was only able to obtain 9 within the timeframe of collecting data. While four teachers were asked to participate and initially agreed, one teacher had unexpected family issues arise and was unable to participate due to time constraints.

Additionally, the researcher's intent was to use face-to-face interviews with all participants during the data collection process of this study in addition to the questionnaires. The weather, however, prevented travel and school attendance for an extended time period, and participants were reluctant to meet face-to-face. Those who did participate agreed to mailed or emailed questionnaires, which they promptly answered and returned. A brief phone interview was also initiated later in the study to glean further information to better understand the study groups. A more thorough understanding of communication methods, support services, and basic needs may have been collected if the researcher had been able to interact with the participants on a more personal level and draw out more detailed responses than can be conveyed in a written survey.

4. *Time Frame of Skyward Database, Surveys and Interviews*

The school system changed to a new database at the beginning of this study in the Fall of 2013. To be able to utilize a complete database, the researcher accessed the last year of complete data from Skyward, which was 2012-13 school year, and asked all participants to reply to the questions based on the school year 2012-2013. The grade of each student during the Skyward Data time frame in the study is noted in the demographic information. There was approximately 8 months between the time the

Skyward Data was accessed and the prospectus was approved for study. Permission from participants immediately began after the prospectus was approved, so the time frame between the database information and analysis of surveys and interviews is approximately 9 months.

Concluding Statements

This research study is significant to the field of education in several ways. First, the study examined methods of delivery of information from the school system to the population of grandparents raising grandchildren. The study focused on the term "chronic early absence" as defined by Chang and Romero (2008) and the understanding of chronic early absence by both educational staff and grandparents. Also, this study revealed possible reasons for high absenteeism in this population, preferred methods of delivery of information, and stated needs and support services from grandparents in this population. Because little research is available on this population, especially focusing on attendance and risk factors associated with grandparents as primary caregivers, this study is a pilot work that shed initial light on the under-researched but important and growing demographic in the education system (grandparent-led households) as well as an under-researched but important topic: chronic early absence. Initial findings indicate that this is, in fact, an at-risk population in regards to attendance.

This study laid the initial groundwork for understanding the role of grandparent-led households in education and in chronic early absence. These preliminary findings reveal a need for future research to more fully understand this population, particularly as it regards chronic early absence. Family units where the grandparents are the primary caregivers are assumed to be the most vulnerable of the many different types of family units since the legacy of childrearing must reconcile a "skipped" generation (Burton & Bengtson, 1985). As an educator, the

researcher would be derelict in her duties if this population was allowed to continue without a thorough understanding of the dynamics involved in the shift of caregiver status and its impact on educational outcomes for our youngest students.

REFERENCES

Bagdi, A., & Vacca, J. (2005). Supporting early childhood social-emotional well being: The
building blocks for early learning and school success. *Early Childhood Education Journal,
33*(3), 145-150. doi:10.1007/s10643-005-0038-y

Barnett, R., & Baruch, G. (1978). Women in the middle years: a critique of research and theory.
Psychology of Women Quarterly 3(2), 187-198.

Bratteli, M., Bjelde, K., & Pigatti, L. (2008). Grandparent and kinship foster care: Implications
of licensing and payment policies. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 51*(3-4), 228-
246.

Bryson, K., & Casper, L. M. (1999) Coresident grandparents and grandchildren. *Current
Population Reports:* 23-198.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). *Toward an experimental ecology of human development.* American
Psychologist. New York, NY.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and
design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1993). The ecology of cognitive development: Research models and
fugitive findings. In R. Wonziak & K. Fischer (Eds.), *Development in context: Acting and
thinking in specific environments* (pp. 3-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). In P. Moen, G. H. Elder, Jr., & K. Luscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development (pp. 619-647).* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005) *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development.* Cambridge, MA: Sage Press.

Brown, D, & De Toledo, S. (1995). Grandparents as parents: A survival guide for raising a second Family. New York, NY: Guildford Publishing.

Brown-Standridge, M. D., & Floyd, C. W. (2000). Healing bittersweet legacies: Revisiting contextual family therapy for grandparents raising grandchildren in crisis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 26*(2), 185-197.

Bruch, C., & Morse, J. (1972). Initial study of creative (productive) women under the Bruch-Morse model. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 16,* 282-289.

Bryson, K. & Casper, L. M. (1999). Coresident grandparents and grandchildren. *Current Population Reports.* 1-10.

Burton, L. M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1985). Black grandmothers: Issues of timing and continuity of roles. In V. L. Bengtson & J. F. Robertson (Eds.), *Grandparenthood* (pp. 61-77). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Butler, F. R., & Zakari, N. (2005). Grandparents parenting grandchildren: Assessing health status, parental stress, and social supports. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing, 31*(3), 43-54.

Canetti, L., Kanyas, K., Lerer, B., Latzer, Y., & Bachar, E. (2008). Anorexia nervosa and

    parental bonding: The contribution of parent-grandparent relationships to eating disorder

    psychopathology. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64*(6), 703-716. doi:10.1002/jclp.20482

Cardona, B., Jain, S., & Canfield-Davis, K. (2012). Home-school relationships: A qualitative

    study with diverse families. *The Qualitative Report, 17¸* 1-20.

Chang, H. & Romero, M. (2008). Present, engaged and accounted for: The critical importance of

    addressing chronic absence in the early grades. *National Center for Children in Poverty*. 1-

    32.

Chipman, R., Wells, S., & Johnson, M. (2002). The meaning of quality in kinship foster care:

    Caregiver, child and worker perspectives. *Families in Society*, *83*, 508-520.

Chiriboga, D. (1981). The development psychology of middle age. *Modern perspectives in the*

    psychiatry of middle Age. (pp. 3-25). New York, NY: Brunner\Mazel.

Coakley, T. M., Cuddeback, G., Buehler, C., & Cox, M. E. (2007). Kinship foster parents'

    perceptions of factors that promote or inhibit successful fostering. *Children and Youth*

    Services Revie, 29, 92-109.

Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009*). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood*

    programs; Serving children from birth through age 8. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Corvellec, H. (2013). *What is theory?: Answers from the social and cultural sciences*.

    Stockholm: *Copenhagen Business School Press.*

Danner, F. (2009). Bronfenbrenner, Urie 1917-2005. *The Gale Group.* Retrieved on March 26, 2014 from www.education.com/reference/article/bronfenbrenner-urie-1917-2005/

Davidhizar, R., Bechtel, G. A., & Woodring, B. C. (2000). The changing role of grandparenthood. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing, 26*(1), 24-29.

Davis, M. M., McGonagle, K., Schoeni, R. F., & Stafford, F. (2008). Grandparental and parental obesity influences on childhood overweight: Implications for primary care practice. *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine : 21*(6), 549-554. doi:10.3122/jabfm.2008.06.070140

Dobson, J. E., & Dobson, R. L. (1985). The sandwich generation: Dealing with aging parents. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 63*(5), 572-574.

Dubowitz, H., Feigleman, S., Harrington, D., Starr, R., Zuravin, S. & Sawyer, R. (1994). Children in kinship care: How do they fare? *Children and Youth Services Review, 16*, 85-106.

Dubowitz, H., & Sawyer, R. J. (1994). School behavior of children in kinship care. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 18*, 899-911.

Dun, L., & Norris, D. (2001) Parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter? American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA.

Dunham, R. M., Kidwell, J. S., & Portes, P. R. (1988). Effects of parent-adolescent interaction on the continuity of cognitive development from early childhood to early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 8*(3), 297-310. Retrieved August 2014 from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fgh&A*N*=MRB-

CDAS0034264&site=ehost-live

Dunlap, E., Tourigny, S. C., & Johnson, B. D. (2000). Dead tired and bone weary: Grandmothers

as caregivers in drug affected inner city households. *Race & Society: Official Journal of the

Association of Black Sociologists, 3*(2), 143-163. doi:10.1016/S1090-9524(01)00026-2.

Edelstein, L. (1997). Revisiting Erikson's views on women's generativity, or Erikson didn't

understand midlife women. *Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association

Chicago, IL.

Education Commission of the States (2010). Chronic early absence: Providing solutions for

increasing achievement in the early grades and preventing school drop-out. *The Progress of

Education Reform, 11 1.

Emick, M. A., & Hayslip Jr. B., (1999). Custodial grandparenting: Stresses, coping skills, and

relationships with grandchildren. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development,

48*(1), 35-61.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth in crisis.* New York. W. W. Norton & Company.

Fergusson, E., Maughan, B., & Golding, J. (2008). Which children receive grandparental care

and what effect does it have? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied

Disciplines, 49*(2), 161-169. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01840.x

Ford, D., & Lerner, R. (1992). *Infants, toddlers, and families: A framework for support and

intervention.* Newberry Park, CA: Sage.

Fruhauf, C. A., & Orel, N. A. (2008). Developmental issues of grandchildren who provide care to grandparents. *International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 67*(3), 209-230.

Freundlich, M., Morris., L., & Hernancez, C. (2003). *Proceedings from race matters consortium: Kinship care: Meeting the needs of children and families of color*. Chicago, IL: Westat.

Fujiwara, T., & Lee, C. K. (2008). The impact of altruistic behaviors for children and grandchildren on major depression among parents and grandparents in the United States: A prospective study. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 107*(1-3), 29-36. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2007.08.016

Fuller-Thomson, E., & Minkler, M. (2000). African American grandparents raising grandchildren: A national profile of demographic and health characteristics. *Health & Social Work, 25*(2), 109-118.

Fuller-Thomson, E., & Minkler, M. (2001). American grandparents providing extensive child care to their grandchildren: Prevalence and profile. *The Gerontologist, 41*(2), 201-209.

Fuller-Thomson, E., & Minkler, M. (2003). Housing issues and realities facing grandparent caregivers who are renters. *The Gerontologist, 43*(1), 92-98.

Galinsky, E. (1999). *Ask the children*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Company.

Garbarino, J. (1992). *Children and families in the social environment* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Garson, G. D. (2012). *Grounded theory*. Asheboro, NC: Statistical Associates

Geen, R. (2004). The evolution of kinship care and practice. *Children, Families, and Foster Care, 14*, 130-149.

Goodman, C. C. (2003). Intergenerational triads in grandparent-headed families. *The Journals of Gerontology.Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 58*(5), S281-9.

Government Printing Office (2003). *Children's living arrangements and characteristics: March 2002. Current population reports, population characteristics* (Series p20-547). Washington, DC: Fields, J.

Goyer, A. (2010). More grandparents raising grandkids. Retrieved on April 18, 2012 from *http://www.AARP.org/relationships/grandparenting/*

Grinstead, L. N., Leder, S., Jensen, S., & Bond, L. (2003). Review of research on the health of caregiving grandparents. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 44*(3), 318-326.

Guttman, D. (1987). *Reclaimed powers*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Hamman, D., & Hendricks, C. B. (2005) The role of the generations in identity formation; Erikson speaks to teachers of adolescents. *The Clearing House*, *79*(2), 72-75.

Hairston, C. (2009). *Kinship care when parents are incarcerated: What we know, what we can do. A review of the research and recommendations for action.* Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Harden, B. J., Clyman, R. B., Kriebel, D. K., & Lyons, M. E. (2004) Kith and kin care: Parental attitudes and resources of foster and relative caregivers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26*, 657-671.

Hayslip, Jr. B., & Shore, R. J., Henderson, C. E., & Lambert, P. L. (1998). Custodial grandparenting and the impact of grandchildren with problems on role satisfaction and role meaning. *The Journals of Gerontology.Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 53*(3), S164-73.

Hayslip, Jr., B. & Kaminski, P. (2005) Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of the literature and suggestions for practice. *The Gerontologist 45(2), 262-69.*

Hayslip, Jr., B., & Kaminski, P. (2010) *Since the start of the great recession, more children raised by grandparents*. Retrieved January 2, 2014 from www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/09/09 since-the-start-of-the-great-recession-more-children-raised-by-grandparents/#prc-jump

Helson, R., & Moane, G. (1987). Personality change in women from college to midlife. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*(1), 176-186.

Helson, R. ,& Wink, P. (1992). Personality change in women from the early 40's to the early 50's. *Psychology and Aging*, *7*(1), 46-55.

Hong, J. S., Algood, C. L., Chiu, Y., & Lee, S. A. (2011). An ecological understanding of kinship foster care in the United States. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 20*(6), 863-872.

Iglehart, A. P. (2004). Kinship foster care: Filling the gaps in theory, research, and practice. *Children and Youth Services Review, Vol*26(7), 613-621.

Inwood, S. (2002). Family ties: Grandparents raising grandchildren. *The Canadian Nurse, 98*(4), 21-25.

Jendrick, M. P. (1994). Grandparents who parent their grandchildren: Circumstances and decisions. *The Gerontologics, 34*, 206-216.

Kelley, E. (1955). Constancy of the adult personality. *American Psychologist, 10*, 659-681.

Kelley, S. J. (1993). Caregiver stressing grandparents raising grandchildren. *IMAGE: Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 25*, 331-337.

Kelley, S. J., Yorker, B. C., Whitley, D. M., & Sipe, T. A. (2001). A multimodal intervention for grandparents raising grandchildren: Results of an exploratory study. *Child Welfare, 80*(1), 27-50.

Kirby, J. B., & Kaneda, T. (2002). Health insurance and family structure: The case of adolescents in skipped-generation families. *Medical Care Research and Review: 59*(2), 146-165.

Klimstra, T. A., Hale, I. W., Raaijmakers, Q. A. W., Branje, S. J. T., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2009). Maturation of personality in adolescence. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 96*(4), 898-912. Retrieved August 18, 2014 from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?Direct=true&db=fgh&A*N*=MFS-37236707&site=ehost-live.

Labouvie-Vief, G. (1985) *Intelligence and cognition*: *Handbook of the psychology of aging.*

New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold

Labouvie-Vief, G. (1994). Women's creativity and images of gender. *Women Growing Older.*

Los Angelas, CA: Sage.

Lebe, D. (1982). Individuation of women. *Psychoanalytic Review,69*, 63-73.

Leflot, G., Lier, P. A. C., Onghena, P., & Colpin, H. (2010). The role of teacher behavior

management in the development of disruptive behaviors: An intervention study with the

good behavior game. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 38*(6), 869-882.

doi:10.1007/s10802-010-9411-4

Livson, F. (1976). Patterns of personality development in middle-aged women: a longitudinal

study. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 7*(2), 107-115.

Marcia, J. E. (1993). The status of the statuses: Research review. *Ego identity: A handbook for*

psychosocial research (pp. 22-41). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Margetts, J. K., Le Couteur, A., & Croom, S. (2006). Families in a state of flux: The experience

of grandparents in autism spectrum disorder. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 32*(5),

565-574. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2214.2006.00671.x

Messing, J. (2005). *From the child's perspective: A qualitative analysis of kinship care*

placements. Berkeley, CA.

McCready, L. T., & Soloway, G. B. (2010). Teachers' perceptions of challenging student

   behaviours in model inner city schools. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 15*(2), 111-

   123. doi:10.1080/13632752.2010.480883.

Miller, D. A. (1981). The sandwich generation: Adult children of the aging. *Social Work, 9*, 419-

   423.

Minkler, M., Berrick, J. D., & Needell, B. (1999). Impacts of welfare reform on American

   grandparents raising grandchildren: Reflections from the field. *Journal of Aging & Social

   Policy, 10*(3), 45-63.

Minkler, M., & Fuller-Thomson, E. (1999). The health of grandparents raising grandchildren:

   Results of a national study. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*(9), 1384-1389.

Minkler, M., & Fuller-Thomson, E. (2005). African American grandparents raising

   grandchildren: A national study using the census 2000 American Community Survey. *The

   Journals of Gerontology.Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 60*(2), S82-

   92.

Minkler, M., & Roe, K. (1993). *Grandmothers as caregivers: Raising children of the crack

   cocaine epidemic*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Minkler, M., & Roe, K. (1998). *Grandmothers as caregivers*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mitchell, V., & Helson, R. (1990). Women's prime of life: Is it the 50's? *Psychology of Women

   Quarterly, 14*, 451-470.

Olive, E. (2010). Behavior management and behavioral change: How can we tell them apart? *Reclaiming Children & Youth, 19*(1), 3-6. Retrieved August 18, 2014 from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fgh&A*N*=51011092&site=ehost-live

Ottoboni, M. (2007). *Family language labels: Effect on children living with non-parental caregivers.* San Rafael, California.

Park, R. (2009). *Children raised by grandparents arrive with family tragedies that can impact development.* Retrieved September 12, 2014 from www.medil/northwestern.edu.

Parker, J., & Asher, S. (1987). Peer relations and later personal adjustment: Are low accepted children at risk? *Psychological Bulletin,* 102, 357-489.

Partin, T. C. M., Robertson, R. E., Maggin, D. M., Oliver, R. M., & Wehby, J. H. (2010). Using teacher praise and opportunities to respond to promote appropriate student behavior. *Preventing School Failure, 54*(3), 172-178. Retrieved June 9, 2014 from http://futurescholars.rutgers.edu/FutureScholars/Images/Using%20Teacher%20Praise%20&%20Opportunities%20To%20Respond%20to%20Promote%20Appropriate%20Student%20Behavior.pdf.

Peters, S. (1999). Grandparents raising grandchildren. *Advance for Nurse Practitioners, 7*(2), 63-64.

Pew Research Center. (2000) *The Return of the Multigenerational Family Household*. Retrieved on January 2, 2014 at www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/03/18/the-return-of-the-multi-generational-family-household/

Phelan, P., Davidson, A., & Yu H. C. (1998). *Adolescents' worlds: Negotiating family, peers and school. Teacher's College Press*.

Pittman, L. (2007). Grandmothers involvement among young adolescents growing up in poverty. *Journal of Research on Adolescence,* 17(1). *89-116.*

Pittman, L., & Boswell, M. (2007). The role of grandmothers in the lives of preschoolers growing up in urban poverty. *Applied Development Science, 11*(1). *20-42.*

Pratt, M. W., Norris, J. E., Hebblethwaite, S., & Arnold, M. L. (2008). Intergenerational transmission of values: Family generativity and adolescents' narratives of parent and grandparent value teaching. *Journal of Personality, 76*(2), 171-198. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2007.00483.x.

Reschke, K. L, Manoogian, M. M., Richards, L. N., Walker, S. K., & Seiling, S. B. (2006). Maternal grandmothers as child care providers for rural, low-income mothers: A unique child care arrangement. *Journal of Children & Poverty, 12*, 159-174.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *Reweaving parents into the fabric of early childhood programs*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Roose, S. & Pardes, H. (1989). *Biological considerations in the middle years*. *The middle years: New psychoanalytic perspectives.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Roe, K., Minkler, M., & Saunders, F. F. (1995). Combining research, advocacy, and education: The methods of the Grandparent Caregiver Study. *Health Education Quarterly; Vol.* 22, 458-475.

Rueda, M. R., & Rothbart, M. K. (2009). The influence of temperament on the development of coping: The role of maturation and experience. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development, 2009*(124), 19-31. doi:10.1002/cd.240

Ruiz, D. S. & Zhu, C. W. (2004). Families maintained by African grandmothers: household composition and childcare experiences. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *28*, 415-423.

Sands, R. G., & Goldberg-Glen, R. S. (1998). The impact of employment and serious illness on grandmothers who are raising their grandchildren. *Journal of Women & Aging, 10*(3), 41-58.

Sawyer, R., & Dubowitz, H. (1994). School performance of children in kinship care. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 18*, 587-597.

Sebag, R. (2010). Behavior management through self-advocacy. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 42*(6), 22-29. Retrieved January 4, 2014 at http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fgh&A*N*=52345154&site=ehost-live

Schwartz, L. I. (1994). The challenge of raising one's nonbiological children. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 22*, 195-207.

Skyward Database (2011-2015). Skyward Database. Hawkins County School System. Retrieved

    September 12, 2012 from Skyward, Inc. https://sis-

    hawkins.tnk12.gov/scripts/wsisa.dll/WService=wsHAWStu/seplog01.w

Smithgall, C., Mason, S., Michels, L., LiCalsi, C., & Goerge, R., (2006). Caring for their

    children's children: Assessing the mental health needs and service experiences of

    grandparent caregiver families *(Working Paper).* Retrieved June 5, 2014 from

    www.chapinhall.org/sitesdefault/files/old_reports

Smith, A. B. and Dannison, L. (2003). Custodial grandparents and schools: Building successful

    partnerships. *M & O*.

Smith, A. & Dannison, L. (2008). Grandparent-headed families in the United States:

    Programming to meet unique needs. *Intergenerational Programming Quarterly,* 1(3), 35-47.

Smith, A. & Dannison, L. (1998). When "grandma" is "mom": What today's teachers need to

    know. *Childhood Education, 75*, 12-16.

Smith, C. J., & Beltran, A. (2000). Grandparents raising grandchildren: Challenges faced by

    these growing numbers of families and effective policy solutions. *Journal of Aging & Social*

    Policy, 12(1), 7-17.

Smith, G. C., & Palmieri, P. A. (2007). Risk of psychological difficulties among children raised

    by custodial grandparents. *Psychiatric Services 58*(10), 1303-1310.

    doi:10.1176/appi.ps.58.10.1303

Smith, J. (2009). Blending effective behavior management and literacy strategies for

    preschoolers exhibiting negative behavior. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*(2), 147-

    151. doi:10.1007/s10643-009-0326-z.

Stanton, A. M. (1998). Grandparents' visitation rights and custody. *Child and Adolescent*

    Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 7(2), 409-422.

Strom, R. D., & Strom, S. K. (2000). Meeting the challenge of raising grandchildren.

    International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 51(3), 183-198.

Swick, K. (2004). *Empowering parents, families, schools and communities during the early*

    childhood years. Champaign, IL: Stipes.

Szinovacz, M. (1998) Grandparents today: A demographic profile. *The Gerontologist, 38*, 37-52.

Thomas, J. L., Sperry, L., & Yarbrough, M. S. (2000). Grandparents as parents: Research

    findings and policy recommendations. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 31*(1), 3-

    22.

Thompson, A. M., & Webber, K. C. (2010). Realigning student and teacher perceptions of

    school rules: A behavior management strategy for students with challenging behaviors.

    Children & Schools, 32(2), 71-79. Retrieved from

    http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fgh&A*N*=52163516&site=ehost-

    live.

Tienda, M., Angel, R. (1982). Headship and household composition among Blacks, Hispanics,

    and other Whites. *Social Forces, 61,* 508-531.

Tsakanikos, E., Costello, H., Holt, G., Sturmey, P., & Bouras, N. (2007). Behaviour management problems as predictors of psychotropic medication and use of psychiatric services in adults with autism. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders, 37*(6), 1080-1085. doi:10.1007/s10803-006-0248-1

Tucker, Jr., L. (2006). The grandparent syndrome: A case study. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 61*, 82-98.

United States Census, American Community Survey, 2013 1-Year Estimates: table S1001 and 2005: table B10001. Retrieved on January 2, 2014 at http://factfinder 2.census.gov.

Viederman, M. (1988). Personality change through life experience. *The Problem of Loss and Mourning: Psychoanalytic Perspectives.* New York, NY: International Universities Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological proceses. Chapter 6 Interaction between learning and development* (Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walker, D. D. (2011). *The impact of custodial and co-parenting relationships on the stress levels of African-American grandmothers. ProQuest.* Retrieved on January 5, 2014 from www.proquest.com/impact_of_custodial_and_co-parenting/

Walker, H., Colvin, G., & Ramsey, G. (1995). *Antisocial behavior in school: Strategies and best practices.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Whitley, D. M., Kelley, S. J., & Sipe, T. A. (2001). Grandmothers raising grandchildren: Are they at increased risk of health problems? *Health & Social Work, 26*(2), 105-114.

Wink, P. (1991). Self-and object-directedness in adult women. *Journal of Personality, 60* (1),

    769-791.

York, K., & John, O. (1992). The four faces of eve: A typological analysis of women's

    personality at midlife. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*(3), 506-507.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questions for Chronic Early Absence Group

1. Have you ever heard of chronic early absence? What do you think it is?

2. Do you believe that attendance at school is important at the early elementary school level? Why or why not?

3. Does the school share information with you about services available for your family? Does the school share other types of information with you? If so, what are you typically informed about? How do you typically learn about services or information from your grandchild's school?

4. What is the most effective way to share information with you? (e.g., e-mail, letters/flyers from the school, phone calls, etc.)

5. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the school counselor? Why or why not?

6. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the teachers? Why or why not?

7. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the staff at the Family Resource Center? Why or why not?

8. What services do you believe would make your involvement in your grandchild's education more successful? (After the grandparent has identified services, the researcher

will mention other potential services as well to elicit thoughts on those options, e.g., tutoring, after-school programs, peer-tutoring at school, support groups for other families similar to yours, etc.)

9. What do you believe are the primary reasons for your grandchild's absences from school?

10. What, if any, challenges can you identify that contribute to your grandchild's absences?

11. Describe your work situation (e.g., full-time, part-time, retired, disabled, etc.). If you are working, what type of job do you have?

12. Are the parents (or parent) involved in the student's life? In what ways? Do the parent/parents have anything to do with the student's education? In what ways?

13. Do you have a computer at home? Are you comfortable using it? Is it connected to the internet? Do you use e-mail?

14. Do you have a cell phone? Is it a smart phone? Do you send text messages? Do you use other services (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, etc.)? Do you use social media (e.g., Facebook, Linked In, etc.)?

15. What is your highest level of education?

16. Do you have reliable transportation? How does your grandchild get to and from school?

17. Does your grandchild participate in any before or after-school activities? If so, what and how often?

18. Is there anything else on the topic of your grandchild's education that you would like to add that I haven't already mentioned?

Appendix B

Questions for High Attendance Rates Group

1. Have you ever heard of chronic early absence? What do you think it is?

2. Do you believe that attendance at school is important at the early elementary school level? Why or why not?

3. Does the school share information with you about services available for your family? Does the school share other types of information with you? If so, what are you typically informed about? How do you typically learn about services or information from your grandchild's school?

4. What is the most effective way to share information with you? (e.g., e-mail, letters/flyers from the school, phone calls, etc.)

5. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the school counselor? Why or why not?

6. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the teachers? Why or why not?

7. Do you believe you have a good relationship with the staff at the Family Resource Center? Why or why not?

8. What services do you believe would make your involvement in your grandchild's education more successful? (After the grandparent has identified services, the researcher will mention other potential services as well to elicit thoughts on those options, e.g., tutoring, after-school programs, peer-tutoring at school, support groups for other families similar to yours, etc.)

9. What do you believe are the primary reason(s) that your grandchild has good attendance? (After listening to all the reasons suggested by the grandparent, the researcher will also elicit more information by mentioning the following: good health of child and/or grandparent, priority of grandparents, student loves school, etc.).

10. Describe your work situation (e.g., full-time, part-time, retired, disabled, etc.). If you are working, what type of job do you have?

11. Are the parents (or parent) involved in the student's life? In what ways? Do the parent/parents have anything to do with the student's education? In what ways?

12. Do you have a computer at home? Are you comfortable using it? Is it connected to the internet? Do you use e-mail?

13. Do you have a cell phone? Is it a smart phone? Do you send text messages? Do you use other services (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, etc.)? Do you use social media (e.g., Facebook, Linked In, etc.)?

14. What is your highest level of education?

15. Do you have reliable transportation? How does your grandchild get to and from school?

16. Does your grandchild participate in any before or after-school activities? If so, what and how often?

17. Is there anything else on the topic of your grandchild's education that you would like to add that I haven't already mentioned?

Appendix C

Questions for School Personnel

1. Have you ever heard of chronic early absence?

2. What special services/information (if any) do you think a custodial grandparent(s) might need to help the grandchild be successful in school?

3. Do you think that grandparent-led households should be considered at-risk? Why or why not?

4. Do you feel that the school does a good job of communicating the importance of attendance to custodial grandparents?

5. What services are available to custodial grandparents related to their grandchild's education?

6. How is information about school and services communicated to custodial grandparents?

7. Is there anything else on the topic of custodial grandparents that you would like to add that I haven't already mentioned?

Appendix D

Research Informed Consent Document

Participant Permission   IRB Protocol #:

                                          IRB Approval Date:

                                          Version:

East Tennessee State University
Department of Teaching and Learning
423 Warf Pickel, Box 70548, Johnson City, TN 37614-1707

ETSU Informed Consent for Participation in Research

<u>**Study Title**</u>**:**

Determining if Grandparents as Primary Caregivers of Pre-K through Third Grade Students in Northeast Tennessee Perceive Delivery of Information and Services Offered as Effective in Decreasing Early Chronic Absence

<u>**Researcher**</u>: Kimberly Cassidy, Doctoral Candidate in Early Childhood Education, ETSU

This is an informed consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study, as well as what to expect if you agree to participate.
Your participation is voluntary.

It is important that you read this material carefully. Please feel free to discuss it with friends or family before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign and return this form to the researcher.

<u>**Purpose**</u>**:**
The purpose of this study is to examine the level and delivery of information and services offered to grandparents who have become the primary caregivers of pre-k through third grade students and determine if the information and services are effective in communicating the importance of

attendance as well as to determine the best methods of communicating with grandparents. This will require the researcher to interview several grandparents to gain their perceptions about the delivery of information, best methods of communication, and other information crucial to the study.

Duration:

The length of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes.

Procedures:

The procedures which will involve you as a research participant include:

1) Participating in an interview with the researcher that will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded for accuracy. The interview will take place at a time and location deemed convenient by you. The audiotape will only be used during transcription, will be held in the researcher's locked file in her locked office, and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

2) After the interview has been transcribed and coded you will be asked to review the findings for accuracy. Any changes to the transcriptions and/or codes suggested by you will be evaluated andcompleted by the researcher.

Alternate Procedures/Treatments

Should you choose not to participate in this research, nothing more will be required of you.

Possible Risks/Discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study.

Possible Benefits

The results of this study could be used to inform school counselors and personnel what methods of communication are most effective in reaching grandparents, what methods of communication are preferred by grandparents, what information and services grandparents determine are most important to them to support their grandchild's education, and to determine if chronic early absence can be decreased with improved communication with grandparents.

Financial Costs

There are no costs to participants that may result from participation in this research study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse participation. You can withdraw from participation at any time without penalty to you or your grandchild.

Contact for Questions

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the primary investigator, Kimberly Cassidy (Doctoral Candidate in Early Childhood Education, ETSU) at 423-754-2862,

or Dr. Amy Malkus, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Learning, at 410-463-0841. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team, or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB coordinator at 423-439-6055 or 423-439-6002.

ETSU wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. We are eager to ensure that anyone in a research study is treated fairly and with respect. Thank you very much for helping us with this important study.

<u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u>

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked office in Warf-Pickel 516 (Dr. Amy Malkus' office, who is the chair of this research study). The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the ETSU IRB and personnel particular to this research (Kimberly Cassidy, Dr. Amy Malkus, a trained research assistant) have access to study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be a participant in the research project.

_____

Signature of Grandparent   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix E

ETSU Informed Consent for Participation in Research

School Personnel Permission   IRB Protocol #:
                                                 IRB Approval Date:
                                                 Version:

East Tennessee State University
Department of Teaching and Learning
423 Warf Pickel, Box 70548, Johnson City, TN 37614-1707

Study Title:

Determining if Grandparents as Primary Caregivers of Pre-K through Third Grade Students in Northeast Tennessee Perceive Delivery of Information and Services Offered as Effective in Decreasing Early Chronic Absence

Researcher: Kimberly Cassidy, Doctoral Candidate in Early Childhood Education, ETSU

This is an informed consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study, as well as what to expect if you agree to participate.
Your participation is voluntary.

It is important that you read this material carefully. Please feel free to discuss it with friends or family before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign and return this form to the researcher.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to examine the level and delivery of information and services offered to grandparents who have become the primary caregivers of pre-k through third grade students and determine if the information and services are effective in communicating the importance of attendance as well as to determine the best methods of communicating with grandparents. This will require the researcher to interview several grandparents to gain their perceptions about the delivery of information, best methods of communication, and other information crucial to the study.

Duration:

The length of the interview will be approximately 30 minutes.

Procedures:

The procedures which will involve you as a research participant include:

1) Participating in an interview with the researcher that will take approximately 30 minutes and will be recorded for accuracy. The tape will only be used during transcription, will be held in the researcher's locked file in her locked office, and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

2) After the interviews have been transcribed and coded, the participants will be asked to review the findings for accuracy. Any changes to the transcriptions and codes will be completed by the researcher.

Alternate Procedures/Treatments

Should you choose not to participate in this research, nothing more will be required of you.

Possible Risks/Discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study.

Possible Benefits

The results of this study could be used to inform school counselors and personnel what methods of communication are most effective in reaching grandparents, what methods of communication are preferred by grandparents, what information and services grandparents determine are most important to them to support their grandchild's education, and to determine if chronic early absence can be decreased with improved communication with grandparents.

Financial Costs

There are no costs to participants that may result from participation in this research study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse participation. You can withdraw from participation at any time.

Contact for Questions

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the primary investigator, Kimberly Cassidy (Doctoral Candidate in Early Childhood Education, ETSU) at 423-754-2862, or Dr. Amy Malkus, Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Learning, at 423-439-7856. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team, or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB coordinator at 423-439-6055 or 423-439-6002.

ETSU wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. We are eager to ensure that anyone in a research study is treated fairly and with respect. Thank you very much for helping us with this important study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked office in Warf-Pickel 516 (Dr. Amy Malkus' office, who is the chair of this research study). The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Teaching and Learning, the ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research (Kimberly Cassidy, Dr. Amy Malkus) have access to study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose for you to be in the research project.

_____

Signature of School Personnel   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

VITA

KIMBERLY DIANNE CASSIDY

Education:	Public Schools, Rogersville, Tennessee
	B.S. Business Management with Concentration in Marketing, Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, TN 1993
	M.A. Special Education with Emphasis in Early Childhood and licensure in Pre-K-3, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 2008
	Ed.S. Educational Administration and Supervision, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN 2009
	Add-On Leadership Practicum, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN 2012
	Ph.D. Early Childhood Education, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 2015
Professional Experience:	Teacher, The Kids' Place Academy, Rogersville, TN 1998-1999
	Early Intervention Specialist, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 2004-2005
	Director of Early Childhood Programs for Hawkins County Schools, Rogersville, TN 1998-present
Publications:	**Cassidy, K. D.** (2012, July) Literature Review for *Learn Every Day: The Preschool Curriculum.* Kaplan Company.