
**RE-ENGAGING YOUTH IN SCHOOL EVALUATION OF MODEL
DEMONSTRATION TRUANCY PROGRAMS**

**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT: GULFTON TRUANCY REDUCTION
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT, HOUSTON, TX**

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Evaluation of the Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project
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EVALUATION OF THE GULFTON TRUANCY REDUCTION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the evaluation outcomes of two components of the Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project: police visits to the homes of truant students and case management for truants. The goals of this portion of the evaluation were to 1) assess the effectiveness of these two components in reducing absences and improving grades, 2) assess the effectiveness of case management in improving school engagement, 3) to a lesser extent examine the relationship between grades and attendance in general, and 4) compare the costs and benefits of case management². The majority of data for this report came from 2004-2005 school year records, student and parent surveys, and police records.

The Gulfton area, and specifically the target high school, Lee, is primarily Hispanic. More than 70% of Gulfton students have limited English proficiency, compared with 27.6% in Houston Independent School District and 13.4% statewide. A large part of the community is made up of Mexican immigrants. In addition, Gulfton's median family income of \$18,733 is nearly 30% below the city's median. In the 97-98 school year, 75% of Gulfton students were eligible for free/reduced lunch.

Two main components of the truancy reduction effort in Houston were examined. The first, the practice of police visiting a truant students' home, was found to be effective in improving attendance, especially within the two weeks immediately following the visit. Long term effectiveness was not established, although it is possible that for some students this practice has a long term effect. Students who received these visits typically missed school for a variety of reasons. For instance, 40% percent of students reported being new to the school, and thus may

¹ This report was supported by Grant No. 2005-JPFX-0059 awarded by the Office of Jevvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

² A cost-benefit of police home visits was also planned; however, given the short-term effects of police visits it would be unfeasible to perform this analysis.

have had difficulty with the enrollment process or simply getting into the routine necessary for daily attendance. Sixty-five percent said they were failing classes and 58% said they had difficulty understanding homework and assignments. In addition, 71% said they needed academic help. Most often, officers referred students to academic tutoring and did not issue tickets for truancy.

Case management services were not effective for the majority of students. The current study found that case management was primarily targeted at students who were most at-risk. Truants receiving case management were compared to truants not receiving case management to explore the effectiveness of case management. Findings suggested that truants who did not receive case management were not struggling as much as those receiving services. In general, attendance, grades and school engagement were worse for truants receiving case management than for truants who were not given the services. Nevertheless, it was found that case management did not improve attendance nor did it improve grades or school engagement for the group as a whole. However, this is not to say that case management was ineffective for every single student. The effect of improving just one student's attendance and grades resulted in an estimated return of investment of over \$4.00 for every \$1.00 spent in providing case management. This fact is reason enough to continue the Houston Truancy Reduction case management efforts.

Given that home visits from police are successful in improving short-term attendance, it is recommended that follow-up with the student occur within two weeks of the visit. Academic tutoring and other activities to increase school engagement should be provided immediately to ensure long term success. In general, case management may be more successful for truants if provided earlier in their school careers. Achievement levels were very low for the students involved in case management. Reaching these students before school failure is eminent would likely improve the outcomes of services.

Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This report details the evaluation outcomes of two components of the Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project: police visits to the homes of truant students and case management for truants. The goals of this portion of the evaluation were to 1) assess the effectiveness of these two components in reducing absences and improving grades, 2) assess the effectiveness of case management in improving school engagement, 3) to a lesser extent examine the relationship between grades and attendance in general, and 4) compare the costs and benefits of case management³.

In Chapter 2 we assess attendance and grade outcomes based on *police visits*, also known as “knock and talks”. To do this, we examined school records for the 2004-2005 school year for students who received police visits between Fall 2003 and Spring 2005. In Chapter 3 we examine the effects of case management on attendance and grades by analyzing school records for the 2004 – 2005 school year and school engagement surveys from students and parents. As part of this examination, we compared the data from students who received case management to two groups who did not. The comparison group students were identified by school staff as being truant, but they were not involved in this intervention. One group was from Lee High School (also the treatment group school) and the other was from Milby High School. Descriptions of the project and the locations of study follow. In Chapter 4, we examine the costs and benefits of case management. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the overall findings and presents recommendations.

Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project - Houston, TX

The Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project was funded by the Office of

³ A cost-benefit of police home visits was also planned; however, given the short-term effects of police visits it would be unfeasible to perform this analysis.

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The funder required that program staff participate in an evaluation of two aspects of their truancy intervention: home visits conducted by police and individualized case management.

Gulfton is a 3.4 square mile apartment community. Due to the large, multi-ethnic immigrant population in this area and language barriers within this community, many agencies believe that the 2000 Census undercounted the Gulfton population. According to the 2000 Census, the Gulfton population is 45,106, of which 13,694 residents are aged 17 or under. Social service agencies and government officials working in Gulfton continue to estimate the true population of Gulfton at 60,000, of which more than 20,000 are juveniles. This represents the highest population density of any Houston community.

In Addition:

- Gulfton's median family income of \$18,733 is nearly 30% below the city's median.
- In the 97-98 school year, 75% of Gulfton students were eligible for free/reduced lunch.
- Nearly 95% of Gulfton elementary and middle school students are "economically disadvantaged, nearly double the Texas rates.
- More than 70% of Gulfton students have limited English proficiency, compared with 27.6% in Houston Independent School District and 13.4% statewide.

Truancy remains one of the prominent risk factors for youth in Houston's Gulfton neighborhood. The Gulfton Truancy Reduction Demonstration Project works to reduce the incidence of truancy and associated juvenile delinquency among high-risk, ninth grade youth who attend Robert E. Lee High School. The program's overriding purpose is to educate the community about truancy and the need to prevent truant behavior, provide early identification, assessment and intervention with truant youth and their families, and improve juvenile and

parental accountability for truancy by providing immediate and meaningful consequences.

As part of their participation in OJJDP's Truancy Reduction Project, the Gulfton site sought to provide services to 250 ninth grade students attending the target area high school, Lee High School. Houston police officers conducted home visits to issue warning notices regarding excessive unexcused absences, assess causes of truancy, counsel on the legal responsibility to attend school, and issue citations for failure to attend school. In addition, the Project provides direct services ranging from facilitating Spanish parenting classes via the Houston Area Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse, to providing court-based case management through the Mayor's Anti-Gang Office Juvenile Accountability Court Program.

Students from Milby High School located in the East Region of the Houston Independent School District were included in the evaluation component of the demonstration project. Milby High School was included as a comparison site with no special truancy intervention programs. The community consists primarily of working class urban city neighborhoods, in which the major employers are the industries along the Houston Ship Channel. This location was selected because the attendance rates were comparable and the neighborhood, while being larger geographically, serves approximately the same number of students and has a similar attendance rate. See Table 1 for more information. However, several differences exist and are likely to influence the results. Consequently, we chose to include a comparison group from Lee High School as well.

Table 1: Lee and Milby High School Facts⁴

	Enrollment	Hispanic	At-Risk	ESL	Special Ed	Attendance Rate	Free/Red Lunch
Robert E. Lee	2,086	79%	89%	36%	9%	92.3%	95%
Milby	2,197	93%	69%	12%	10%	93%	86%

Methodology

To assess attendance and grade outcomes based on *police visits*, we examined school records for the 2004-2005 school year for students who received police visits between Fall 2003 and Spring 2005, and “knock and talk” police reports filled out by officers during and shortly after the home visit. To examine the effects of case management on attendance and grades we analyzed school records for the 2004 – 2005 school year and pre- and post-tests using school engagement surveys from students and parents. As discussed earlier, school engagement was assessed using one comparison group from Lee High School (also the treatment group school) and one from Milby High School. The cost-benefit analyses were based on information provided on case management students entered into the TRAIN database, an online database hosted by the National Center for School Engagement.

⁴ *District and School Profiles*, Houston Independent School District, 2004-2005. Secondary students are at-risk if they failed any section of the TAKS on their most recent attempt, failed two or more courses the previous year, or are over-age for their grade.

CHAPTER 2: KNOCK AND TALK DATA⁵

Of 193 knock and talk police visit records from the 2004-2005 school year, 92% of students served were Hispanic/Latino, 5% were black and less than 3% were white or other. 102 (53%) were male. Both 8th and 9th graders received police visitors; 54% were in 9th grade and the majority were 15 years old (33%), but ages ranged from 11 to 19.

Only four students had received in-school suspensions, but 25 had at least one out-of-school suspension. None of the students had been expelled, but five were on probation at the time of the visit. Seven percent had previous involvement with the criminal justice system (11 students). Of those, the offenses included assault, criminal mischief and trespassing, fighting, marijuana possession, and runaway.

Police officers typically visited the homes only once (74%), and 15% of the time, the home visit was not accomplished because no one was at the home. In 29% (48) of the cases, the student no longer lived at the residence that the officer visited. Although the goal of the visit was to meet with both the parent and the student, this occurred only 69% of the time. In 29 instances (18%) the officer only met with the parent, and in 22 (13%) instances, the officer only spoke with the student.

A warning notice was issued in 98% of the visits, and in only 2% of the visits were tickets issued. In addition, 40% were referred to academic tutoring, 3% to transportation help, 1% to mental health counseling, less than 1% to substance abuse counseling, health services, mentoring, or job training/employment placement (for parents only). An additional 5% were

⁵ Percentages reported are based on different numbers depending on the information available. Police records of knock and talk visits have varying levels of completeness so not all numbers are based on the full sample.

referred to various other options, like GED services/tutoring and day care for the student's children.

In the majority of the cases, parents (62%) and students (78%) reported being aware that the student had missed three days of classes and that these were unexcused. Parents and/or students (82%) were aware of the school policies around attendance; and, 72% were aware that the state law required tickets to be issued for violating truancy laws.

According to police records, there were a number of reasons why students were failing to attend. Forty percent of students reported being new to the school. Sixty-five percent said they were failing classes and 58% said they had difficulty understanding homework and assignments. In addition, 71% said they needed academic help. Five percent reported being afraid to go to school, which included reasons of bullying, and four percent said that peers encouraged them to cut classes. Although few officers reported anything about student/teacher relations, of those who did, 28 reported that the students got along well with the teachers, 56 reported that relations were "okay" or that there was a problem with only one teacher, and 14 reported that relationships were not good.

Students reported a variety of activities while skipping school, however, most declined to answer (60%) and others refused to admit that they skipped class at all. The activities reported included: "hanging out," "staying home," "being sick," taking care of family members (including childcare), watching TV, and playing games. Only 5% reported having a job, and only 2 students reported working 30 or more hours a week.

Families were equally likely to have two parents in the home compared to being single parent households. The majority of parents (79%) were employed. Almost 10% of parents said

they kept the student home to take care of family members (including younger siblings).

Twenty-six percent of parents told officers that the students were absent due to illness.

Parents also reported on their relationships with their children and the schools. Eighty-four percent said they talk to their children about their problems, but 14% said they had difficulty disciplining them. Only 4% suspected that their children were using drugs. Fifty-seven percent of parents said they had met with teachers and/or principals on both school progress and truancy issues.

Police officers made notes about their observations in the home. In general, officers felt that the living conditions met the basic needs of the students; there were only ten cases where this was not true. In addition, only 6% (7) homes were reported as having health or hygiene issues.

In an effort to explore the effectiveness of the police visits on attendance, 110 school records were obtained and data analyses were conducted to explore the short and long-term effects. Graphical representations of the pattern of absences among students who received knock and talks appear on the next pages. These graphs show the average absence rate per day, where a 1 means all students were absent, and a zero means all students were present for that day. Consequently, a .5 means half of the knock and talk students missed that day of school. In general, these graphs indicate that absence rates appear to drop immediately following the police visit; the long-term effects are less clear.

The first graph represents the average absences over the 60 days prior to the police visit and the 60 days following police visit. The zero point is the day in which the police visit occurred. Each circle represents the average absence rate for each school day. Three regression lines (linear, cubic, and quadratic) are included to explore different patterns in the data. A

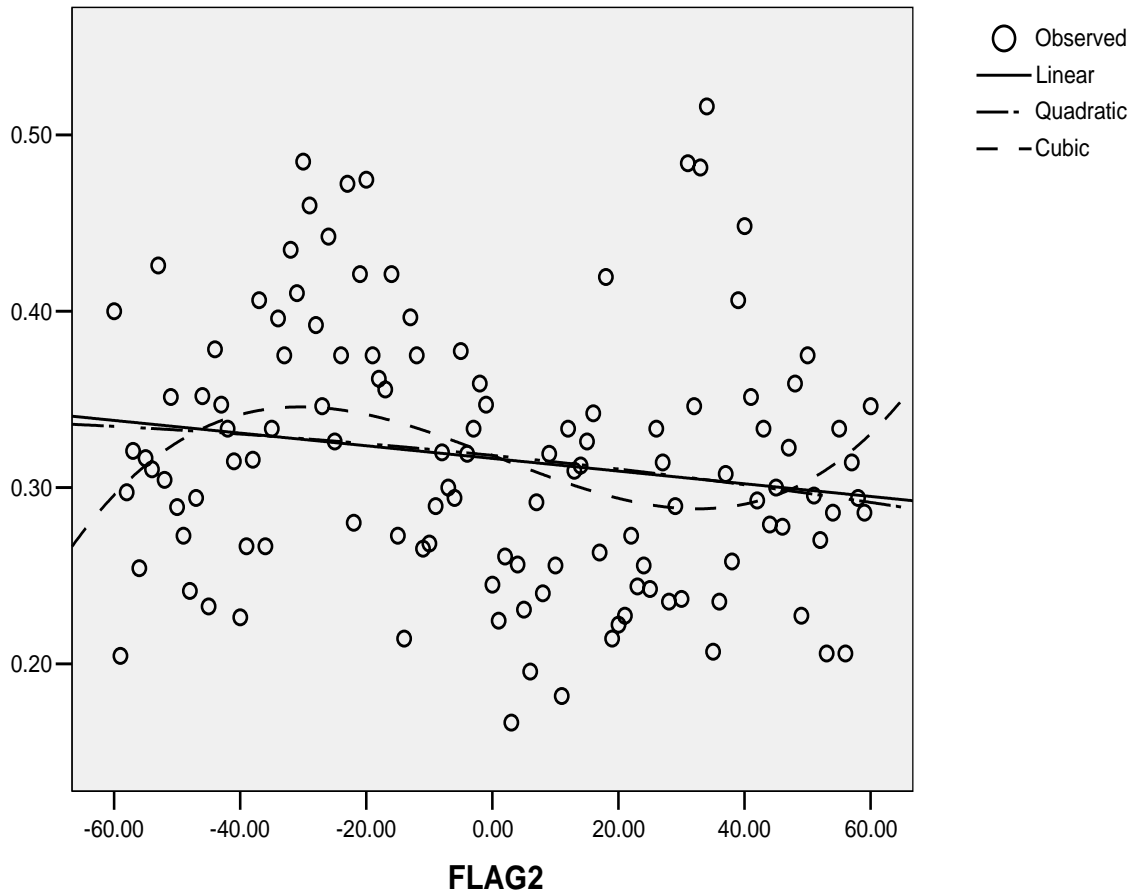
straight line shows that there is a consistent pattern indicating an overall decrease or increase in absences. A cubic line can indicate that the pattern of absences changes direction at some point. For instance, a cubic line would accurately reflect the data if attendance was declining and then gradually began to increase. A quadratic line indicates that absences can decline, increase again, then decline again or vice versa; essentially the pattern changes twice. None of the regression lines, and thus, none of these types of patterns account for more than 20% of the variance in absence rate. This means that absences over a 60 day period do not have a predictable pattern as a result of the officer visiting the home.

It is more plausible that a single police visit does not have a long term effect. To examine this, we produced a second graph which represents a more restricted time period; 30 days prior to and 30 days after the police visit. The variance accounted for in this restricted time period indicates that all three regression lines, or patterns, account for a significant amount of variance. However, the cubic and quadratic lines – each indicating that absence rates slowly increase following the immediate improvement – account for 44% of the variance each. The linear pattern (solid line in the graph), which indicates a long term decrease in absence, only accounts for 33% of the variance and is thus not as representative of the actual data⁶. Consequently, it appears as if the police visits have a short-term effect on absences, but no long term effect⁷. Since these analyses are not conclusive, the next section addresses a second statistical technique (analysis of variance) to analyze the effects of the knock and talks.

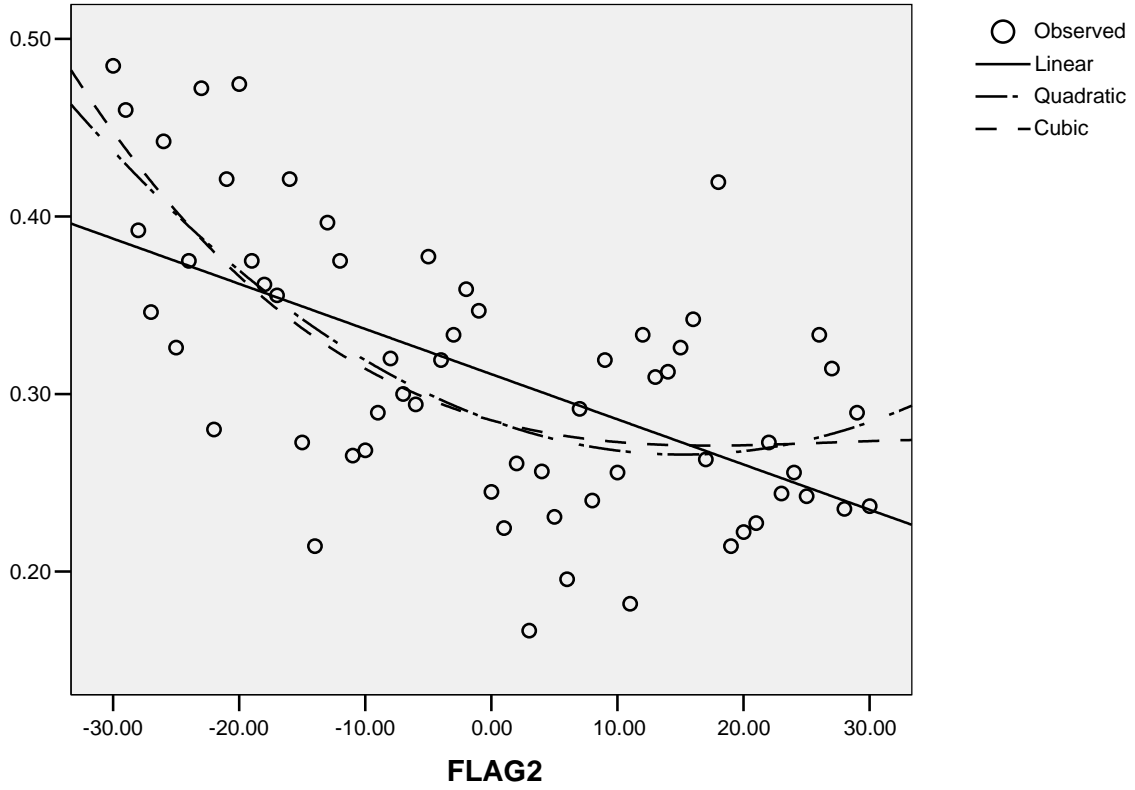
⁶ Regression lines are not necessarily independent and thus do not explain unique variance. The amount of variance accounted for by any combination would not necessarily add up to 100%.

⁷ It is worth noting that the data show a decline in absence rate *before* the police visit. Thus, it is possible that the continued decline following the police visit is not a result of the visit.

mean absences



mean absences



Examining the Long and Short Term Effect of Police Visits: Analyses of Variance

Two analyses of variance were explored to determine if the police visits had significant short- and/or long-term effects on attendance. The first analysis compared average attendance during the 31 days before the police visit, to the ten days after the police visit, to the 20 days following that (days 11 through 31). The average absence rate before the police visit was .35; that is, approximately 35% of all students who received knock and talks were absent on any given day before the police visit. This rate dropped to .24 during the first ten days following the visit (24% of students were absent immediately following the police visit), and then rose slightly to .28 during days 11 through 31. Post-hoc comparisons showed that the initial drop in the absence rate as well as the longer term drop were statistically significant ($p < .001$), but the increase from the short-term to longer term effect was not. Simply stated, approximately 10% more students went to school following the police visit.

A second analysis comparing the ten days before the police visit, to the ten days immediately following the visit, and to the 11th through 21st days following the visit also showed significant improvement with similar (but not identical) patterns: pre-visit means were significantly larger than the ten days following the visit, but no significant differences were found with either time period using the 11 to 21 days follow-up period. That is, absences rose to similar levels as before the visit, but not so much that they were statistically different from the immediate improvement. Specifically, before the police visit an average of 32% of students missed school, immediately following the visit 24% missed school, and 11 to 21 days after the police visit, 29% missed school.

Given both analyses, it is clear that the immediate effect of the police visit is that it reduces the absence rate. There is no clear pattern as to the longer term effect.

Grades

Given that grades are likely to be affected by attendance, we explored these data to examine whether grades were better for students with fewer absences among the children who received knock and talks. To do this, we conducted correlational analyses using 110 knock and talk students' records. As expected, absences were significantly correlated with GPA for students who received knock and talks. First semester absences were correlated .36 ($p < .001$) with GPA and second semester absences were correlated .32 ($p < .001$). Consequently, for students who received knock and talks, approximately 18% of the variance in grades is determined by non-attendance⁸. This is evidence that among students who receive knock and talks, grades are likely to be better for students who attend more regularly.

Conclusions: Police Visits

According to police notes, the students who receive knock and talks are likely to have a number of stressors that impede their school attendance, and some of these are directly related to family obligations. Nevertheless, the data show that having a police officer visit the home produces short-term improvement in attendance. In addition, it is likely that for a small number of children there may be long-term improvement as well. For those children who do improve their attendance, data show that grades are likely to improve as well. Consequently, it seems reasonable that an effective course of action would be to have a second event occur within 10 days of the police visit – one that strives to keep students engaged in and attending school. Coordination of a second, immediate but longer term intervention following the police visits is likely to greatly increase student efforts and improve outcomes.

⁸ Given the “non-causal” nature of correlation, it is also accurate to say that it is possible that 18% of non-attendance is determined by grades; however it seems relatively more likely that non-attendance influences grades. This is not to say that students with poor grades may not be more likely to become disengaged with school and thus stop attending.

In addition, the police records appear to gather data that could be quite useful to a case manager. For instance, the data show that 71% students reported that they were struggling academically; however, only 40% were referred to tutoring. If officers do not have the ability or inclination to refer all students who claim to need help academically, it may be that a case manager or school official could follow-up using these reports to make sure all the needs of the students could be addressed.

CHAPTER THREE: CASE MANAGEMENT

School Attendance

We analysed 33 sets of school records on truant Lee High School students who received case management for truancy during the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. In addition, both Lee High School and Milby High School provided school records on students who met the definition of truancy but were not selected for case management. There were 91 comparison students, 25 from Lee and 66 from Milby.

Attendance was examined for the school year 2004-2005. During the first semester, Fall 2004, the comparison students (those who did not receive case management) had significantly fewer absences than the treatment students. On average, comparison students missed 1.40 days per week compared to treatment students who missed an average of 1.89 days. This finding is not particularly surprising because the most serious cases were selected for case management. Consequently, they were unlikely to be a fair comparison group because they were less “at-risk” than the treatment students.

Interestingly, there were no significant differences in the second semester between comparison students and treatment students. Comparison students missed an average of 2.14 days per week during the Spring 2005 semester and treatment students missed an average of 2.54 days per week. Thus, although treatment students had more absences than the comparison group, the difference is not significant, which means it could be a result of chance.

There are a number of ways to explain these results. The obvious interpretation is that case management was not effective because student attendance worsened – (2.54 days per week missed in the Spring compared to 1.89 days in the Fall). However, this may be too simplistic. Statistically, the lack of a difference in the Spring semester between the comparison and

treatment groups is interpreted as if there are no reliable differences between the two groups. However, there were significant differences in the Fall. In addition, although the absences are higher for both groups in the Spring, it is not unreasonable to assume that absences increase as the school year progresses. Given the fact that treatment and comparison groups differed in the Fall but not in the Spring, and the assumptions that absences worsen as the school year progresses, one could surmise that attendance among the treatment students was actually better than it would have been in the absence of case management. This is a reasonable interpretation given that one might expect that attendance among the higher risk students (the treatment students) would decline especially quickly over the course of the year. The results of these data suggest that the comparison students and the treatment students were more or less equivalent at the second semester and thus, case management, although not being effective in significantly reducing absences, may have improved attendance above what it would normally have been⁹.

Grades

Final GPA was provided to us at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. Consequently, it was not possible to examine how the 2004-2005 treatment students' grades might have changed over the course of the school year. However, we were able to compare the treatment group with the comparison groups. The treatment group GPAs were, on average, significantly lower than either comparison group. Students receiving case management had an average GPA of .63, whereas the Lee comparison group had an average GPA of 1.61, and the Milby comparison group had an average of 1.32. Since other data show that the comparison students were not similar at the beginning of the year, it is difficult to conclude that the case management services

⁹ Additional analyses were conducted to examine if the patterns were the same comparing only the Lee comparison group with the Lee treatment group. Although the differences were not significant, they were approximately the same average difference. In addition, the Milby and Lee comparison groups were compared and they too showed no statistically significant differences and no meaningful difference in practical terms.

failed to effect achievement. Nevertheless, an average GPA of .63 indicates that these students were still failing after receiving as much as a full school year of case management.

We also obtained the final GPA for 20 students who received case management for both years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. Although there were no significant changes in GPA for these students, the average GPA did decrease from 1.00 at the end of 2003-2004 to .81 at the end of 2004-2005.

School Engagement Surveys

Student Engagement

Although there are a number of reasons to assess school engagement, the current study was primarily interested in evaluating the effects of case management as provided in the truancy demonstration project compared to no similar case management.¹⁰ The National Center for School Engagement survey has 102 quantitative indicators; consequently 102 comparisons were performed within and between groups (see appendix XX for the student engagement survey).

In order to examine the outcomes of case management, students receiving case management responded to the school engagement survey twice. Due to the timing of case management surveys, the time period between the first administration of the survey and the second varied; however, the majority of students had approximately 7 to 8 months of services typically corresponding with the 2004-2005 school year. In addition, the majority of students in both comparison groups, from Lee and Milby, also took the engagement survey at the beginning and end of the school year¹¹.

¹⁰ Although our comparison group students were not receiving case management in the truancy demonstration reduction project, it is probable that at least some of them were receiving attention from the school concerning their truancy, as per school policy.

¹¹ A few of the comparison students were given pre and post tests during the 2003-2004 school year as well. These data were used to increase sample size.

There were 19 case management students who took both the pre-test and the post-test. In addition, there were 24 students from Milby and 16 students from Lee who also had matched sets of pre and post test surveys. It is difficult to show statistical significance with such small samples. Consequently, in addition to examining the significant differences on single items, we also created scales that generally measure four types of school engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and parental involvement (see Appendix A for the items that make up these scales). If individual items failed to differ significantly but all changed in similar patterns, we might expect the scales to show significant differences that might otherwise be overlooked.

Responses to the school engagement survey show that neither comparison group was similar to the group receiving services. Essentially, both comparison groups were significantly more engaged on 17 (Lee comparison) and 21 (Milby comparison) of the engagement items in the initial testing (at pre-test). In addition, both comparison groups were also more behaviorally engaged and had more parental involvement on the pre-test scales than the group receiving case management. Although it is true that the comparison groups were technically truant, it is clear that the students identified for case management were less engaged in school from the beginning (see Appendix B for tables illustrating these differences). This sampling bias is not surprising given that randomized selection was not part of the evaluation component of the Houston truancy reduction demonstration project.

At post-test, students receiving case management were still not as engaged as the comparison groups. In fact, the comparison groups were more engaged on 23 (Milby comparison) and 32 (Lee comparison) school engagement items compared to the Lee case management students. Consequently, the difference between the groups from pre-test to post-

test increased. It is difficult to argue that this was a school effect since the difference between Lee comparison and Lee treatment increased even more than the differences observed between Lee and Milby.

A second attempt to examine school engagement effects was simply to compare the case management students to themselves. That is, to ask the question, “Did the case management students become more engaged from pre-test to post-test?” The results indicate that attitudes among Lee treatment students actually worsened throughout the school year. As Table 2 shows, there was only one significant incident where school engagement improved after receiving case management: treatment students answered that they got good grades more often. However, there were seven items that worsened over the course of the school year.

Table 2: Significant Changes in School Engagement Items for Students Who Received Case Management Services

<i>Question*</i>	Scale	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
How many friends do you have at this school?*	1 = 0 friends 2 = 1-5 friends 3 = 6-10 friends 4 = more than 10 friends	3.72	3.33	Number of friends decreases.
Most of my teachers care about how I'm doing.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.89	2.42	Students perceive reduction in level of teachers' caring about them.
When I read a book, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand what it is about.	1 = always 5 = never	2.94	3.83	Students ask themselves less often about reading material.
I get good grades in school.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.26	2.95	Students perceive improvement in grades.
If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood I now live in.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.79	2.16	Students would miss their neighborhood less if they were to move.
I feel safe in my neighborhood.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.11	2.42	Students feel less safe in their neighborhood
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you do your homework?*	1 = never 4 = very often	1.74	1.37	Parents help with homework less often.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunchtime) that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	2.32	1.84	Parents talk less often with students about non-curricular activities.

It is commonly believed however, that student engagement in general worsens as the school year progresses and as students get older. This, in fact, occurred with both comparison groups: the Lee comparison groups worsened on 7 items, but improved on 5 items and the Milby comparison group worsened on 6 items, and only improved on 1. See Appendix C for the changes in the comparison groups. Consequently, since all groups worsened somewhat, from pre- to post-test, it is unlikely that the worsening attitudes should be attributed to case management. Instead, it is possible that attitudes simply changed due to a natural process. That is, the Lee treatment group was worse in the beginning and worsened over the course of the year *and* so did the comparison groups.

Family Engagement Surveys

The parents of students who received case management were also asked to respond to the National Center for School Engagement's Family Survey, a survey intended to measure parental attitudes toward school, measure involvement with the school, and gather information about the student and school engagement from the parents' perspective. Only treatment group parents participated in the Family Engagement Survey. Each parent was asked to fill out a pre and post survey.

Twenty-one parents had matched pre and post surveys. Results indicate that parent perceptions changed little over the course of their children's involvement in case management. However, four significant differences emerged:

- More parents reported attending a parent-teacher conference at post-test. Responses indicate that before case management services, most parents never attended a conference, but following services they were more likely to report that they attended one.

- Before becoming involved with case management, on average, parents reported that their children had been absent from school occasionally, whereas after services, they reported that their children had been absent frequently.
- Following case management services, parents were less likely to agree that the school staff were doing good things for their child.
- Following case management services, parents were less likely to agree that they had confidence in the people at their child's school.

Given that these were the only significant changes, it is difficult to conclude that these changes resulted from case management services. Nevertheless, it is possible that case management increased parental attention given to truancy. This may have resulted in increased awareness of the problem and perhaps the seriousness of the behavior. For instance, the fact that they perceived students as missing more school following case management may reflect greater awareness of the student's behavior or a personal adjustment as to what occasionally vs. frequently means to them. Increased awareness and involvement with the school may have resulted in the other changes.

Conclusions: Case Management and Outcomes

These data do not show a positive impact on the outcomes of case management. At first blush, it appears that it has little effect on attendance, achievement, or engagement; and this may in fact be the case. However, it would be unwise to surmise that this is true for all students in case management: there were likely some successes for some individuals. It is important to remember that the case management students were by comparison the highest risk students. It may be that case management is more effective for students whose truant behavior is not so deeply ingrained. In addition, it does appear that case management was effective in improving

attendance at some level, given that case management students were truant significantly more than the comparison groups at the beginning of the year, but not at the end of the year.

Nonetheless, attendance still worsened over the course of the year, so even if case management ameliorated the problem, the benefits were probably not substantial enough to make a practical improvement in the school/academic lives of most of the students served. Recommendations about improvements and perhaps refocusing the truancy prevention efforts will be discussed in the last chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOUSTON COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Data used in this analysis are from September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2004. Since the benefits of education are generally not realized until after an individual completes his or her education and enters the workforce, the financial benefit assumed to result from successful intervention with a truant child is equated to that obtained by high school graduation. To determine the cost benefit ratio for the program, 1) calculate the total savings based on the estimated number of graduates the program will produce, multiplied by the per capita savings associated with high school graduation; 2) subtract the total cost of case management; 3) and divide by the total cost of case management. This will yield the return expected for each dollar invested in the program.

Case management was provided to 43 youth about whom information was entered into the TRAIN database. Given the gender and racial composition of these children, the average benefit of providing the means for one of them to graduate from high school is \$188,377 in current dollars¹². A budget of \$47,511 paid the salary, benefits and expenses for one case manager. Dividing by 43 yields a per child case management cost of \$4,381.

In the absence of longitudinal data showing eventual high school graduation or dropout, determining program success is a subjective process, and the best method is to offer a range of outcomes based on several different scenarios. This analysis presents benefits as determined by three different definitions of success.

1) Rigorous: Success is defined as having two or fewer unexcused absences at program exit AND having earned a grade point average of 2.0 (“C”) or better.

¹² The data on the benefit of high school graduation were taken from Vernez, Krop and Rydell, Closing the Education Gap, RAND 2000. In their analysis they include the cost of social welfare programs and criminal justice expenditures that are incurred to a disproportionate degree by high school dropouts, and lost income tax contributions due to the combined effect of lower rates of employment and lower wages. Costs are tallied over the expected lifetime of the individual, from 18 to 80 years of age, and the resulting figure is discounted to the current value of the money. The undiscounted figure is over \$800,000 per dropout.

2) Moderate: Success is defined as having two or fewer unexcused absences at exit and improving average grades by at least half a letter, e.g. from D- to D.

3) Inclusive: Success is defined as making good improvement in attendance, regardless of the absolute number of absences at exit, and improving grades by at least half a letter.

Outcome data are obtained from the TRAIN database. Attendance data were available for all 43 students, but letter grades at intake and at least one update were available for only 32 of them. Of these 32, only one student met the “rigorous” definition of success, three students met the “moderate” definition, and five met the “inclusive” definition¹³. However, since all students were exited from the database at the end of the school year, it is impossible to know which students continued to receive case management during the following year. For this reason, success was difficult to determine, and some students may have been prematurely classified as successful or not successful.

Savings Under the Most Inclusive Definition of Case Management Success

If all five students who meet the inclusive definition of success eventually graduate from high school, the case management success rate would be 5/32 or 15.63%. When this rate is applied to all 43 students who received case management services, total savings may be expressed as follows:

$$(\$188,377 \times 43 \times .1563) - \$47,511 = \$1,218,552.$$

Under this scenario, the return to each dollar invested in the program ($1,218,552 \div 47,511$) would equal almost \$26 – a high return for a social service program – and the total saved in one year alone would be more than \$1.2 million.

¹³ Although six students met the criteria for the inclusive definition of success, one of them, a 17-year-old 9th grader, was exited from case management due to withdrawal from school. Therefore, only five students are counted as successful according to this definition.

Savings Under the Moderate Definition of Case Management Success

Following the same formula for three successes rather than five yields the following outcomes.

The success rate equals $3/32$ or 9.38%.

Total savings equals $(\$188,377 \times 43 \times .0938) - \$47,511 = \$712,289$.

The return to each dollar invested equals \$15.

Savings Under the Rigorous Definition of Case Management Success

The success rate equals $1/32$ or 3.13%.

Total savings equals $(\$188,377 \times 43 \times .03125) - \$47,511 = \$205,621$.

The return to each dollar invested equals almost \$4.33.

Even our most restrictive definition of success yields a highly positive estimated return on investment in case management services. A return of \$4.33 is considered quite good compared to the returns generated by other successful social service programs.

It must be noted however, that even the “rigorous” definition of success may overestimate program benefits for two reasons. First, being successful while case management services are being offered does not equate to high school graduation. Despite having developed a better habit of school attendance, many things may yet occur to impede graduation, particularly for students who are overage for their grade. Second, we can only assume that the students identified as successful would *not* graduate without the case management. In order to really understand the impact of case management we would need to track the progress of these students, along with the progress of a comparison group using the TRAIN data who did not receive case management, until all students either graduated or dropped out of high school.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five types of data analyses were discussed in this report. The results range from promising to potentially disappointing. However, there are several ways to interpret these results and many changes to consider that may improve future outcomes.

The most promising data, and perhaps the most important, is gleaned from the cost benefit analyses. Although it is true that using the most rigorous standard for success, only one child benefited from case management, the return on investment was over \$4.00 for every \$1.00 spent. This fact is reason enough to continue the Houston Truancy Reduction case management efforts. In addition, even if this were the only child to meet the rigorous standard of success, it is likely that many other were helped in a number of ways that were not measured or discussed in this report.

The practice of police visits showed a short-term effect of improving attendance, with the possibility of long term effects for some students. In addition, the evidence shows that grades are associated with attendance for these students. Consequently, the prime time to re-engage these students and ensure long term attendance and achievement is likely to be directly after a police visit. Case managers should, therefore, communicate regularly with the police who conduct the visits in order to engage those students immediately, preferably during their next school day.

The attendance data of students who received case management suggest that case management may have been minimally successful in slowing the decline in attendance over the school year. However, there was no evidence that it improved attendance. In addition, no improvements were observed in school engagement attitudes on the part of students or their parents. It is likely that because the students receiving case management were the worst in terms

of at-risk indicators, intervention simply came too late to achieve successful outcomes. Future case management services might benefit from identifying struggling students earlier in their school careers. In addition, it is possible that other outcome measures (such as successful GED completion) may show as yet unmeasured benefits of case management.

Appendices

Appendix A: Student Engagement Survey

National Center for School Engagement STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Items that make up scales are color coded as follows:

- Behavioral Items: Yellow
- Emotional Items: Red
- Cognitive Items: Blue
- Parental Involvement: Green

1. Your ethnicity: S1A = White/Anglo S1B = African American S1C = Hispanic/Latino
S1D = American Indian S1E = Asian/Pacific Islander S1F = Other
3. If your primary language is not English, how comfortable are you using English to speak with the administrators and teachers at your school? Please fill in the appropriate circle.
S3 1 = Very comfortable 2 = Somewhat comfortable 3 = Somewhat uncomfortable
4 = Very uncomfortable
4. How many friends do you have at this school? Please check the appropriate box,
S4 1 = 0 2 = 1-5 3 = 6-10 4 = more than 10
5. How many friends do you have that do not go to this school?
S5 1 = 0 2 = 1-5 3 = 6-10 4 = more than 10
8. Do you have any brothers or sisters who have been expelled from school?
S8 1 = Yes 0 = No 888 = No siblings
9. Do you have any friends or other relatives who have been expelled from school?
S9 1 = Yes 0 = No 888 = No siblings
10. Do you have any brothers or sisters who have been suspended from school?
S10 1 = Yes 0 = No 888 = No siblings
11. Do you have any friends or other relatives who have been suspended from school?
S11 1 = Yes 0 = No
12. Do you have any brothers or sisters who have dropped out of school?
S12 1 = Yes 0 = No 888 = No siblings
13. Do you have any friends or other relatives who have dropped out of school?
S13 1 = Yes 0 = No

14. How often have you thought of dropping out?

S14 0 = Never 1 = A little 2 = A lot

16. How many times have you repeated a grade?

S16 0 = 0 1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = More than 2

17. Have you every skipped a grade?

S17 0 = No 1 = Yes

18. Do you have children of your own?

S18 0 = No 1 = Yes

19. When I first walked into my school I thought it was...(fill in the appropriate number.)

S19A = Good

S19B = Noisy

S19C = Friendly

S19D = Clean

S19E = Ugly

S19F = Crowded

S19G = Dark

S19H = Comfortable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Quiet
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dirty
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Beautiful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uncrowded
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Light
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uncomfortable

20. Since school started this year, how often have you had trouble?

S20A = Getting along with your teachers?

S20B = Paying attention in school?

S20C = Getting your homework done?

S20D = Getting along with other students?

Never	A few times	Once a week	Almost daily	Daily
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

21. How important do you think?

S21A = An education is?

S21B = It is to get good grades?

S21C = The things you are learning in school are going to be to you later in life?

S21D = It is to attend school every day?

S21E = It is to go to college?

S21F = It is to have a good job or career after finishing school?

Very Important	Quite Important	Fairly Slightly	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

26. During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?

S26 1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or 7 6 = 8 or 9 7 = 10
or 11 8 = 12 or more

27. During the past 12 months, how many times has someone stolen or deliberately damaged your property such as your car, clothing, or books on school property?

S27 1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or 7 6 = 8 or 9 7 = 10
or 11 8 = 12 or more

28. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?

S28 1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or 7 6 = 8 or 9 7 = 10
or 11 8 = 12 or more

29. How likely is it that you will do each of the following things after high school?

- S29A = Start working on a full-time job.
- S29B = Get the kind of job I would like after finishing school.
- S29C = Attend a technical or vocational school
- S29D = Serve in the armed forces
- S29E = Graduate from a two-year college program.
- S29F = Graduate from a four-year college program.
- S29G = Attend graduate or professional school after college

Definitely won't	Probably Won't	Not Sure	Probably Will	Definitely Will
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

30. How much do you agree with each of the following statements?

- S30A = I'd like to get out of the neighborhood.
- S30B = I like my neighborhood.
- S30C = If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood I now live in.
- S30D = I feel safe in my neighborhood.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4

31. During the last 3 months when you were in school, about how often did one of your parents...

- S31A = Check your homework after it was completed?
- S31B = Help you do your homework?
- S31C = Help you prepare for tests?
- S31D = Talk with you about your expertise at school with classes or class work that day?
- S31E = Talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunch time) that day?

Never	Once or Twice	Sometimes	Very Often
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4

Appendix B: Tables of Differences between Comparison Groups and Treatment Group on Student Engagement

COMPARISON GROUPS, LEE H.S. AND MILBY H.S. – PRE-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Lee Pre-Test Mean	Milby Pre-Test Mean	Description of Results
How many time shave you repeated a grade?	0 = never 1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = more than 2	.88	.38	Lee students repeat grades more than Milby students.
When I first walked into my school I thought it was clean.	1 = clean 7 = dirty	2.60	3.90	Lee students think school was cleaner than do Milby students.
Since school started this year, how often have you had trouble getting along with your teachers?*	1 = never 5 = daily	2.81	1.96	Lee students have more frequent trouble getting along with teachers than do Milby students.
How important do you think it is to attend school every day?*	1 = very important 5 = not at all important	1.81	1.39	Lee students think it is less important to attend school daily than do Milby students.
I am happy to be at my school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.75	2.13	Lee students are happier to be at school than are Milby students.
The teachers at my school treat students fairly.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.00	2.46	Lee students perceive that teachers treat students more fairly than do Milby students.
I like most of my teachers at school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.75	2.25	Lee students like their teachers more than do Milby students.
I will fail no matter how hard I try.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.81	3.38	Lee students believe they will fail more than do Milby students.
I will graduate from high school.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.63	1.29	Lee students believe they are less likely to graduate from high school than do Milby students.
Most of my classes are boring.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.63	2.21	Lee students perceive their classes to be less boring than do Milby students.
I respect most of my teachers.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.31	1.79	Lee students respect their teachers more than do Milby students.

Most of my teachers understand me.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.00	2.42	Lee students believe that their teachers understand them better than do Milby students.
When I am in class, I just pretend I am working.*	1 = always 5 = never	4.06	3.54	Lee students just pretend to be working less than do Milby students.
I follow the rules at school.*	1 = always 5 = never	1.75	2.29	Lee students follow the rules more often than do Milby students.
I get in trouble at school.	1 = always 5 = never	4.31	3.63	Lee students get in trouble less often than do Milby students.
I feel excited by the work in school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.75	3.50	Lee students feel more excited by the work in school than do Milby students.
I am interested in the work I get to do in my classes.	1 = always 5 = never	2.25	3.13	Lee students are more interested in their classwork than are Milby students.
I skip (cut) classes during school.	1 = always 5 = never	4.56	2.86	Lee students skip classes less often than do Milby students.
During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon?*	1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or 7 6 = 8 or 9 7 = 10 or 11 8 = 12 or more	1.00	1.33	Lee students have never been threatened or injured with a weapon during the past year; Milby students have been, although on average, less than once during the year.
How likely is it that you will attend graduate or professional school after college?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	3.06	3.92	Lee students think themselves less likely to attend graduate/professional school than do Milby students.
I like my neighborhood.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.31	1.78	Lee students like their neighborhood less than do Milby students.
I feel safe in my neighborhood.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.31	1.83	Lee students feel less safe in their neighborhood than do Milby students.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

COMPARISON GROUPS, LEE H.S. AND MILBY H.S. – POST-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Lee Post-Test Mean	Milby Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
How often have you thought of dropping out?	0 = never 2 = a lot	.63	.21	Lee students think about dropping out more than do Milby students.
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was noisy.*	1 = noisy 7 = quiet	2.27	3.29	Lee students think school is noisier than do Milby students.
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was clean.*	1 = clean 7 = dirty	2.82	3.91	Lee students think school is cleaner than do Milby students.
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was crowded.*	1 = crowded 7 = uncrowded	3.75	2.70	Lee students think school is less crowded than do Milby students.
I am happy to be at my school.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.75	2.13	Lee students are happier to be at school than are Milby students.
I feel safe at my school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.81	2.33	Lee students feel safer at school than do Milby students.
I will graduate from high school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.63	1.17	Lee students believe they are less likely to graduate from high school than do Milby students.
Most of my classes are boring.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.75	2.08	Lee students feel their classes are less boring than do Milby students.
I respect most of my teachers.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.50	2.04	Lee students respect their teachers more than do Milby students.
Most of my teachers understand me.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.13	2.63	Lee students feel their teachers to be more understanding than do Milby students.
Most of my teachers expect too much of me.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.88	2.38	More Lee students believe that their teachers expect too much than Milby students.
I get in trouble at school.*	1 = always 5 = never	4.25	3.67	Lee students get in trouble less often than Milby students.

I feel excited by the work in school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.88	3.48	Lee students feel more excited by their school work than do Milby students.
I am interested in the work I get to do in my classes.	1 = always 5 = never	2.25	3.04	Lee students are more interested in their classwork than are Milby students.
I enjoy the work I do in class.	1 = always 5 = never	2.56	3.25	Lee students enjoy their classwork more than do Milby students.
I feel I can go to my teacher(s) with the thing that I need to talk about.	1 = always 5 = never	2.63	3.50	Lee students feel that they can talk to their teachers more than do Milby students.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunch time) that day?*	1 = never 4 = very often	2.69	3.25	Lee students' parents talk with them less often about non-curricular activities than do Milby students' parents.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

LEE H.S. TREATMENT GROUP (LEETX) AND COMPARISON GROUP (LEECOMP) – PRE-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	LeeTx Pre-Test Mean	LeeComp Pre-Test Mean	Description of Results
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have been suspended from school?	0 = no 1 = yes	.63	.20	LeeTx students have more suspended siblings than do LeeComp students.
How often have you thought of dropping out?	0 = never 1 = a little 2 = a lot	.89	.31	LeeTX students think of dropping out more often than do LeeComp students
I am happy to be at my school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.37	1.75	LeeTx students are less happy to be at school than are LeeComp students.
The teachers at my school treat students fairly.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.45	2.00	LeeTX students perceive teachers to treat students less fairly than do LeeComp students.
I like most of my teachers at school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.37	1.75	LeeTx students like their teachers less than do LeeComp students.
Most of my teachers expect too much of me.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.37	1.93	LeeTx students perceive teachers to expect too much of them less than do LeeComp students.
When I am in class, I just pretend that I am working.	1 = always 5 = never	3.11	4.06	LeeTx students pretend to be working more than do LeeComp students.
I follow the rules at school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.42	1.75	LeeTx students follow rules less than do LeeComp students.
I get in trouble at school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.21	4.31	LeeTx students get in trouble more often than do LeeComp students.
I check my schoolwork for mistakes.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.53	2.75	LeeTx students check their work less often than do LeeComp students.
If I don't understand what I read, I go back and read it over again.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.00	2.19	LeeTx students reread what they don't understand less often than do LeeComp students.

I try my best at school.	1 = always 5 = never	2.32	1.44	LeeTx students try their best less than LeeComp students.
I skip (cut) classes during school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.58	4.56	LeeTx students skip classes more often than do LeeComp students.
I skip (cut) the entire school day.	1 = always 5 = never	3.72	4.75	LeeTx students skip the whole day more often than do LeeComp students.
I feel I can go to my teacher(s) with the things that I need to talk about.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.37	2.50	LeeTx students feel they can talk to teachers less than do LeeComp students.
How likely is it that you will start working at a full-time job after high school?*	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	3.84	3.20	LeeTx students perceive it to be more likely they will be working at a full-time job than do LeeComp students.
If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood I now live in.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.79	2.56	LeeTx students would miss their neighborhood more than would LeeComp students.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents check your homework after it was completed?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.84	2.63	LeeTx students' parents check their homework less often than do LeeComp students' parents.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

LEE H.S. TREATMENT GROUP (LEETX) AND COMPARISON GROUP (LEECOMP) – POST-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	LeeTx Post-Test Mean	LeeComp Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have been suspended from school?	0 = no 1 = yes	.61	.25	LeeTx students have more suspended siblings than do LeeComp students.
Do you have any friends or other relatives who have been suspended from school?*	0 = no 1 = yes	.89	.63	LeeTx students have more friends or relatives suspended from school than do LeeComp students.
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have dropped out of school?	0 = no 1 = yes	.56	.19	LeeTx students have more siblings who have dropped out than do LeeComp students
How many times have you repeated a grade?	0 = 0 1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = more than 2	1.42	.75	LeeTx students have repeated grades more often than have LeeComp students
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was good.*	1 = good 7 = bad	3.72	2.45	LeeTx students think their school was worse than do LeeComp students.
I am happy to be at my school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.37	1.75	LeeTx students are less happy to be at school than are LeeComp students.
I feel safe in my school.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.37	1.81	LeeTx students feel less safe in school than do LeeComp students.
I like most of my teachers at school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.16	1.63	LeeTx students like their teachers less than do LeeComp students
I am not interested in school.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.97	3.44	LeeTx students are less interested in school than are LeeComp students.
I learn a lot from my classes.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.26	1.75	LeeTx students feel that they learn less from their classes than do LeeComp students.
I respect most of my teachers.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.95	1.50	LeeTx students respect their teachers less than do LeeComp students.

School is a waste of time.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.89	3.44	LeeTx students believe school is more of a waste of time than do LeeComp students.
I follow the rules at school.	1 = always 5 = never	2.68	2.00	LeeTx students follow the rules less than do LeeComp students.
I get in trouble at school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.21	4.25	LeeTx students get in trouble more than do LeeComp students.
I feel excited by the work in school.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.53	2.88	LeeTx students feel less excited by school work than do LeeComp students.
I am interested in the work I get to do in my classes.	1 = always 5 = never	3.05	2.25	LeeTx students are less interested in class work than are LeeComp students.
When I read a book, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand what it is about.	1 = always 5 = never	3.68	2.31	LeeTx students ask selves reading questions less than do LeeComp students.
I study at home even when I don't have a test.*	1 = always 5 = never	4.11	3.38	LeeTx students study at home less than do LeeComp students.
If I don't understand what I read, I go back and read it over again.*	1 = always 5 = never	3.00	2.25	LeeTx students reread what they don't understand less than do LeeComp students.
Most of my teachers praise me when I work hard.	1 = always 5 = never	3.53	2.44	LeeTx students feel that they are praised for hard work less often than do LeeComp students.
I try my best at school.	1 = always 5 = never	2.47	1.63	LeeTx students try less than do LeeComp students.
I get good grades in school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.95	2.33	LeeTx students get good grades less than do LeeComp students.
I skip (cut) the entire school day.	1 = always 5 = never	3.53	4.38	LeeTx students skip the whole school day more than do LeeComp students.
I try to stay home from school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.26	4.06	LeeTx students try to stay home from school more than do LeeComp students.

I enjoy the work I do in class.	1 = always 5 = never	3.26	2.56	LeeTx students enjoy class work less than do LeeComp students.
During the past 30 days, how many days did you not go to school because you felt it would be unsafe at school or on your way to school?	1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or more	2.61	1.38	LeeTx students did not go to school because they felt unsafe more days than did LeeComp students.
How likely is it that you will start working at a full-time job after high school?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	4.21	3.19	LeeTx students believe it to be more likely that they will work a full-time job after high school than do LeeComp students.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents check your homework after it was completed?*	1 = never 4 = very often	1.61	2.25	LeeTx students' parents check homework less often than do LeeComp students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you do your homework?*	1 = never 4 = very often	1.37	1.94	LeeTx students' parents help them with homework less often than do LeeComp students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you prepare for tests?*	1 = never 4 = very often	1.47	2.06	LeeTx students' parents help them prepare for tests less often than do LeeComp students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience at school with classes or class work that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.89	2.69	LeeTx students' parents talk with them about classes less often than do LeeComp students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunch time) that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.84	2.69	LeeTx students' parents talk with them about non-curricular activities less often than do LeeComp students' parents.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

LEE H.S. (TREATMENT GROUP) AND MILBY H.S. (COMPARISON GROUP) – PRE-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Lee Tx Pre-Test Mean	Milby Pre-Test Mean	Description of Results
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have been suspended from school?*	0 = no 1 = yes	.63	.33	Lee students have more suspended siblings than do Milby students.
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have dropped out of school?	0 = no 1 = yes	.44	.17	Lee students have more siblings who have dropped out than do Milby students.
How often have you thought of dropping out?	0 = never 1 = a little 2 = a lot	.89	.29	Lee students think of dropping out more often than do Milby students.
How many times have you repeated a grade?	0 = 0 1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = more than 2	1.33	.38	Lee students have repeated a grade more times than have Milby students.
Since school started this year, how often have you had trouble getting along with your teachers?*	1 = never 5 = daily	2.61	1.96	Lee students have had trouble with teachers more often than have Milby students.
How important do you think it is to go to college?*	1 = very important 5 = not at all important	1.78	1.26	Lee students think it is less important to go to college than do Milby students.
How important do you think it is to have a good job or career after finishing school?*	1 = very important 5 = not at all important	1.58	1.13	Lee students think it is less important to have a good job than do Milby students.
I will fail no matter how hard I try.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.78	3.38	Lee students believe that they will fail regardless of effort more than do Milby students.
I will graduate from high school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.74	1.29	Lee students believe less that they will graduate from high school than do Milby students.
I want to go to college.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.05	1.52	Lee students want to go to college less than do Milby students.
I am not interested in school.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.79	3.26	Lee students are less interested in school than are Milby students.

I try my best at school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.32	1.78	Lee students try their best at school less than do Milby students.
I get good grades at school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.26	2.42	Lee students get good grades less often than do Milby students.
I skip (cut) the entire school day.	1 = always 5 = never	3.72	4.58	Lee students skip the whole school day more often than do Milby students.
I try to stay home from school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.37	4.13	Lee students try to stay home from school more often than do Milby students.
I daydream a lot in class.	1 = always 5 = never	3.58	2.87	Lee students daydream less often than do Milby students.
During the past 30 days, how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to school?	1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or more	2.00	1.21	Lee students felt unsafe and stayed home from school more days than did Milby students.
How likely is it that you will graduate from a four-year college program?*	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	3.11	3.79	Lee students believe it is less likely that they will graduate from college than do Milby students.
How likely is it that you will attend graduate or professional school after college?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	3.11	3.92	Lee students believe it is less likely that they will attend graduate/professional school than do Milby students.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you do your homework?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.74	2.50	Lee students' parents help them with their homework less often than do Milby students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience at school with classes or class work that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	2.26	3.00	Lee students' parents talk to them about the day's classroom experiences less often than do Milby students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunch-time) that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	2.32	2.96	Lee students' parents talk to them about the day's non-curricular experiences less often than do Milby students' parents.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

LEE H.S. (TREATMENT GROUP) AND MILBY H.S. (COMPARISON GROUP) – POST-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Lee Tx Post-Test Mean	Milby Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
Do you have any brothers or sisters who have dropped out of school?	0 = no 1 = yes	.56	.25	Lee students have more siblings who have dropped out than do Milby students.
How often have you thought of dropping out?	0 = never 1 = a little 2 = a lot	.83	.21	Lee students think of dropping out more often than do Milby students.
How many times have you repeated a grade?	0 = 0 1 = 1 2 = 2 3 = more than 2	1.42	.42	Lee students have repeated a grade more times than have Milby students.
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was good.	1 = good 7 = bad	3.72	2.25	Lee students thought their school was worse than did Milby students.
How important do you think it is to go to college?*	1 = very important 5 = not at all important	1.79	1.29	Lee students think it is less important to go to college than do Milby students.
I will fail no matter how hard I try.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.89	3.38	Lee students believe that they will fail regardless of effort more than do Milby students.
I will graduate from high school.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.95	1.17	Lee students believe less that they will graduate from high school than do Milby students.
I want to go to college.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.95	1.46	Lee students want to go to college less than do Milby students.
There is an adult at school that I can talk to about my problems.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.84	2.42	Lee students believe they have an adult at school to talk to more than do Milby students.
School is a waste of time.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.89	3.54	Lee students believe that school is a waste of time more than do Milby students.
When I read a book, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand what it is about.	1 = always 5 = never	3.68	2.63	Lee students ask selves questions about reading less often than do Milby students.
I study at home even when I don't have a test.*	1 = always 5 = never	4.11	3.58	Lee students study without tests less than do Milby students.

I try my best at school.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.47	1.88	Lee students try their best at school less than do Milby students.
I get good grades at school.	1 = always 5 = never	2.95	2.39	Lee students get good grades less often than do Milby students.
I skip (cut) the entire school day.	1 = always 5 = never	3.53	4.25	Lee students skip the whole school day more often than do Milby students.
I try to stay home from school.	1 = always 5 = never	3.26	4.21	Lee students try to stay home from school more often than do Milby students.
During the past 30 days, how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to school?	1 = 0 2 = 1 3 = 2 or 3 4 = 4 or 5 5 = 6 or more	2.61	1.17	Lee students felt unsafe and stayed home from school more days than did Milby students.
How likely is it that you will start working at a full-time job after high school?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	4.21	3.42	Lee students believe it is more likely that they will start working at a full-time job after high school than do Milby students.
How likely is it that you will graduate from a four-year college program?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	2.74	3.79	Lee students believe it is less likely that they will graduate from college than do Milby students.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents check you homework after it was completed?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.61	2.33	Lee students' parents check homework less often than do Milby students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you do your homework?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.37	2.46	Lee students' parents help them with their homework less often than do Milby students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents help you prepare for tests?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.47	2.50	Lee students' parents help them prepare for tests less often than do Milby students' parents.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience at school with classes or class work that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.89	3.17	Lee students' parents talk to them about the day's classroom experiences less often than do Milby students' parents.

During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunch-time) that day?	1 = never 4 = very often	1.84	3.25	Lee students' parents talk to them about the day's non-curricular experiences less often than do Milby students' parents.
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*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

**Appendix C: Tables of Pre-Post Differences
in Comparison Groups**

LEE H.S. (COMPARISON GROUP) – PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
If your primary language is not English, how comfortable are you using English to speak with administrators and teachers at your school?*	1 = very comfortable 4 = very uncomfortable	1.58	2.08	Students feel less comfortable speaking English with school personnel.
How many friends do you have at this school?*	1 = 0 friends 2 = 1-5 friends 3 = 6-10 friends 4 = more than 10 friends	3.75	3.56	Number of friends decreases.
How often have you thought of dropping out?	0 = never 2 = a lot	.31	.63	Students think of dropping out more often.
When I first walked into my school, I thought it was ugly.*	1 = ugly 7 = beautiful	2.44	4.11	Students perceive school as less ugly.
How important do you think an education is?*	1 = very important 5 = not at all important	1.25	1.06	Students perceive education as more important
Most of my teachers are always telling me what to do.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.25	1.94	Students perceive teachers as telling them what to do less.
When I am in class, I just pretend that I am working.	1 = always 5 = never	4.06	3.25	Students just pretend they are working more often.
If I don't know what a word means when I am reading, I do something to figure it out, like look it up in the dictionary or ask someone.*	1 = always 5 = never	2.13	2.75	Students try to figure out what words mean less often.
I skip (cut) classes during school.	1 = always 5 = never	4.56	3.88	Students skip classes more often.
I get good grades in school.	1 = always 5 = never	2.80	2.33	Students perceive that they get good grades more often.
I skip (cut) the entire school day.*	1 = always 5 = never	4.75	4.38	Students skip the whole school day more often.
How likely is it that you will graduate from a two-year college program after high school?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	2.56	3.19	Students believe they are more likely to graduate from 2-year college program
I'd like to get out of my neighborhood.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.38	3.00	Students want to get out of neighborhood less.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$

MILBY H.S. (COMPARISON GROUP) – PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS

<i>Item/Question*</i>	Scale	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Description of Results
How important do you think it is to attend school every day?*	1 = very important 4 = not at all important	1.39	1.61	Students think it is less important to attend school every day
The students at this school don't like students who are different.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	2.35	2.61	Students perceive the students at the school dislike those who are different less.
I respect most of my teachers.*	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.79	2.04	Students respect teachers less.
How likely is it that you will serve in the armed forces after high school?	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	1.92	2.42	Students believe that they are more likely to serve in the armed forces.
How likely is it that you will attend graduate or professional school after college?*	1 = definitely won't 5 = definitely will	3.92	3.46	Students believe that they are less likely to attend graduate or professional school.
I feel safe in my neighborhood.	1 = strongly agree 4 = strongly disagree	1.83	2.17	Students feel less safe in their neighborhoods.
During the last 3 months, how often did one of your parents talk with you about your experience with other school activities (sports, lunchtime) that day?*	1 = never 4 = very often	2.96	3.25	Parents talk more often with students about non-curricular activities.

*For asterisked items, $p < .10$; for all other items, $p < .05$