

Family Engagement, Attendance, and Performance on Statewide Assessments in Kansas

This report outlines an analysis conducted by the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) Evaluation Project, which explored correlations between family engagement and chronic absenteeism as well as between chronic absenteeism and student performance on statewide assessments. Findings revealed that there is a significant correlation between family engagement and chronic absenteeism, as well as between chronic absenteeism and student achievement on statewide assessments. These findings highlight the importance of utilizing family engagement strategies to improve student attendance and achievement.

Family Engagement in Kansas

The connection between family engagement and positive student impacts are well documented and clearly recognized by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), which oversees and funds the Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC). KPIRC promotes family engagement at all levels of education, providing information and resources to support parents, educators, and community organizations to promote the educational success of students from prekindergarten through 12th grade in Kansas. KPIRC is strategically embedded within TASN to support integration of family engagement practices across statewide initiatives for maximum reach and impact. TASN is comprised of more than a dozen initiatives that aim to build the capacity of districts to improve student outcomes and the quality of education provided in Kansas.

Family Engagement and Chronic Absenteeism

Family engagement is known to positively impact student attendance (Michael et al., 2015). To explore how family engagement impacts attendance in Kansas, the TASN Evaluation team analyzed the Family Engagement Survey—Version 2 and publicly available chronic absenteeism data from KSDE (<https://datacentral.ksde.org/>). Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days for any reason and includes excused and unexcused absences.

The Family Engagement Survey—Version 2 (FES-2; Gaumer Erickson, Groff, et al., 2022) is an online survey designed to inform district and building leaders of their success at engaging parents/guardians in the education of children and to identify strategies for improvement. The FES-2 is based on the National Parent Teacher Association Standards for Family–School Partnerships and is typically administered annually. The survey is designed to be distributed to every student’s parent or guardian and is comprised of 20 questions which measure five domains of family engagement: 1)

Welcoming Environment, 2) Supporting Student Learning, 3) Effective Communication, 4) Sharing Power and Advocacy, and 5) Community Involvement. Learn more about the Family Engagement Survey at <https://www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc/family-engagement-survey>.

The FES-2 was tested for reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) with 4,159 parent responses during the 2021–2022 school year (Gaumer Erickson, Haught, et al., 2022). Reliability analysis included 123 parent responses for preschools, 2,281 for elementary schools, 842 for middle schools, and 913 for high schools. The FES-2 was found to be highly reliable (20 items; $\alpha = .973$). The Welcoming Environment domain consists of four items ($\alpha = .925$), the Effective Communication domain consists of five items ($\alpha = .887$), the Supporting Student Learning domain consists of four items ($\alpha = .880$), the Sharing Power and Advocacy domain consists of four items ($\alpha = .922$), and the Community Involvement domain consists of three items ($\alpha = .924$).

For the current analysis, FES-2 and chronic absenteeism data were retrieved for all districts in the state that completed the FES-2 and had publicly available data on chronic absenteeism in the 2020–21 school year. There were 24 districts that met these criteria. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between overall mean FES-2 rating and that district's percentage of students who met criteria for chronic absenteeism as well as between mean subscale ratings and percentage of students with chronic absenteeism using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28). Results showed a moderate significant negative correlation ($r = -.41$) between the FES-2 total mean score and chronic absenteeism. Within FES-2 subscales, two domains were significantly correlated to chronic absenteeism: Welcoming Environment ($r = -.47$) and Sharing Power and Advocacy ($r = -.45$).

Chronic Absenteeism and State Assessment Performance

To evaluate the impact that chronic absenteeism had on the proficiency of students, the TASN Evaluation team analyzed publicly available chronic absenteeism and state assessment data from KSDE (<https://datacentral.ksde.org/>). Analyses were performed using data from all schools in the state that reported both absenteeism data and state assessment data in the 2020–21 school year. Data from 1,377 schools were included. Analyses looked at impact for all students as well as at four student subgroups (students with a disability, students eligible for free or reduced lunch rates, students who are nonwhite, and students who are English language learners) to determine if chronic absenteeism had a larger impact on specific populations.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine to what extent the variance in the percentage of students performing at Level 1 (below grade level expectations) in English Language Arts

(ELA) and math could be attributed to that school’s percentage of chronically absent students. The regression analysis indicates that chronic absenteeism explains more than 25% of the variance in state assessment scores in both ELA and math. The results of this analysis are shared below.

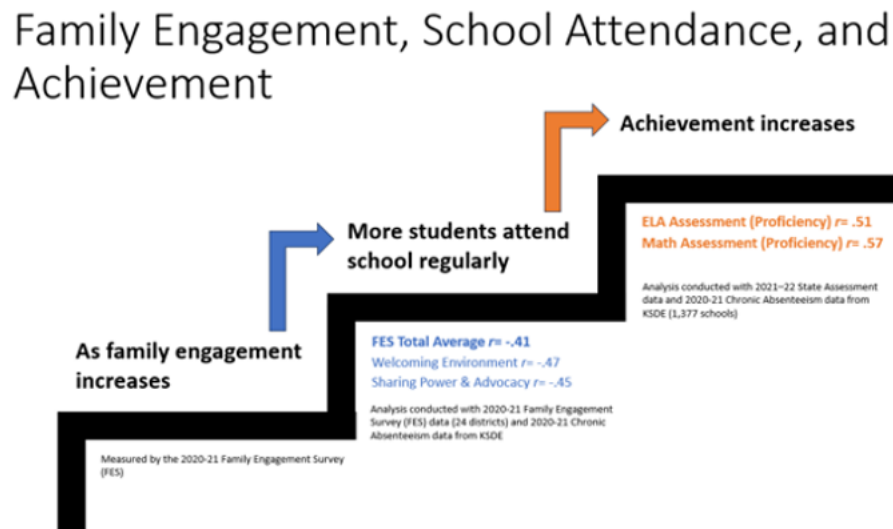
Table 1. Percentage of Variance in State Assessment Scores Attributed to Chronic Absenteeism

Subgroup	Level 1 ELA	Level 1 Math
All students	26.2%	32.7%
With a Disability	16.2%	21.0%
Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch	19.8%	26.3%
Nonwhite	24.3%	30.3%
English Language Learner	8.1%	12.8%

Additionally, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated between chronic absenteeism and the percentage of students performing at level 1 on ELA and math state assessments. The results show a strong significant Pearson correlation for ELA (.51) and for math (.57).>

These findings highlight the importance of utilizing family engagement strategies to improve student attendance and achievement, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Impact of Family Engagement on Student Attendance and Achievement



This report can be cited as: Miller, E. & Gaumer Erickson, A. S. (2023). Family engagement, attendance, and performance on statewide assessments in Kansas. Kansas Technical Assistance System Network.

<https://www.ksdetasn.org/resources/3666>

References

- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334.
- Gaumer Erickson, A. S., Groff, J., Noonan, P. M., Monroe, K., Haught, T., & Huff, T. (2022). *Family Engagement Survey—Version 2*. KSDE Technical Assistance System Network.
<https://www.districttools.org/districts>
- Gaumer Erickson, A. S., Haught, T., & Miller, E. (2022). *Family Engagement Survey overview/instructions* [Technical guide]. Center for Research on Learning, University of Kansas.
https://ksdetasn.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/resource/upload/1073/Family_Engagement_Survey_Overview-Instructions.pdf
- Michael, S. L., Merlo C. L., Basch, C. E., Basch, C. E., Wentzel, K. R., & Wechsler, H. (2015). Critical connections: Health and academics. *Journal of School Health*, 85(11), 740–758.