Trade Professions: The Alternate Route for Chronically Absent Student Success

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Abstract

Motivated by my experience working with chronically absent students within the Princeton, New Jersey community, I sought to find an alternate, viable route for these students to find success after graduating from Princeton High School. As a result of their attendance and academic record combined with their low socioeconomic status and lack of support from their school community, these students would not be able to apply and be accepted into a typical 4-year college program at a college or university. However, I believed they did have the motivation and support from the Accept, Compete, Excel (ACE) program to enlist in an alternate route. Through this research, I was trying to establish trade schools and trade professions as this feasible alternate route. Using research from boards of education in the United States and abroad related to the causes and statistics of chronic absenteeism alongside information from countless studies and experiences of students enrolling in trade schools, the data shows trade schools offer chronically absent students a career with both longevity and financial stability.

Keywords: Chronic absenteeism, trade schools, trade professions

Literature Review:

The focal point of this research is to offer a preventative measure to students labeled as chronically absent before the effects of their absenteeism negatively impact their life after primary school. Chronic absenteeism can be defined as missing 10% of the total amount of school days in a given school year (Patnode et al, 2018). Although schools implement absence recovery programs and hire social workers to address absenteeism cases, schools often cannot solve the demographic, societal, and familial issues that cause students to be chronically absent throughout the school year. Not only does chronic absenteeism cause students to miss most of the integral information related to core subjects like Language Arts, math, science, and social studies, it hinders students' behavioral and social development. As a result of missing 10% of the total school days, students' exposure to interacting with their peers, learning social cues, and defining themselves as individuals is reduced. These academic and social skills are necessary to hone before entering higher education or workplace setting. Without them, students may not be successful in a typical post-primary school track. Thus, school systems need to create an alternate and viable career path for students who may not be properly prepared for typical higher education.

Trade schools and trade professions are the alternate paths chronically absent students need after primary school to enter into and maintain a successful career. The purpose of a trade school is to prepare students to transfer directly from the school into the job they are trained for with the proper credentials and skills. The careers trade schools prepare students for typically involve manual labor and extensive work with machinery. Trades can include carpentry, plumbing, insulation and carpet installation, and landscaping. Like a typical four-year college, students can choose which trade they would like to learn upon enrolling in a trade school.

However, unlike a four-year college, trade schools do not offer academic classes like the core subjects taught in primary schools. Instead, all classes and training are specific to the trade students' operating systems and protocols. By removing this "academic" aspect of higher education, students affected by chronic absenteeism would not fall behind in a trade school as the previous core-subject content of primary education would not provide a foundation for any of the skills learned in a trade school. Trade schools employ the "learning-by-doing" educational technique as students perform the task in class rather than learning how to do it later in their careers. Trade school acts as the ultimate preparer for one's focused career.

After working closely with chronically absent students and understanding the difficulties they would have transitioning into typical higher education, it was apparent primary schools needed to offer another feasible option to ensure the success of all students regardless of their chronic absentee status. Thus, the foundation of this research is to prove trade schools and careers can serve as choices offered to chronically absent students to ensure they can be successful in a career without following the typical higher education, four-year degree path.

To obtain the necessary evidence to ensure trade schools are a practical option for chronically absent students seeking some form of higher education and employment after primary school, sources from educational institutions were consulted. The authors of and establishments behind these sources sought to define and expose the intricacies of chronic absenteeism and how students suffered academically and socially. In addition to finding peer-reviewed material about chronic absenteeism, this research also required proof of how trade schools and careers could potentially raise the success rate of chronically absent students after primary school. Thus, source material published directly from and by trade schools and careers was also included in this research.

Inequality Among Chronically Absent Students

The sources explored below discuss distinct reasons for why certain groups of students are chronically absent including specific demographic information and how these categorizations are exploited by the education system. By revealing which groups of students are more susceptible to chronic absenteeism, programs like ACE can work towards targeting solutions for these demographic groups.

The following sources pinpoint which students are more susceptible to chronic absenteeism based on their demographics and other societal factors. After analyzing the data divulged in these sources, it is clear that race and ethnicity have a major role in how chronically absent a student is during a given school year. In their publication from 2019, *Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools*, the U.S. Department of Education detailed how race and ethnicity contribute to the number of days a student is absent per school year. The Department recognizes these categories dictate outside factors in a student's life that then affect their ability to ensure their school attendance is the main priority stating, "We know that many students experience tremendous adversity in their lives- including poverty, health challenges, community violence, and difficult family circumstances- that make it difficult for them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn at school" (2016). The research and polling done by The Department depict major disparities in chronic absenteeism related to race and ethnicity showing that American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and African Americans are 40% to 50% more likely to lose up to three weeks or more of school during the year. Hispanic students and students belonging to two or more races are close behind percentage-wise.

The California Department of Education (2020) also scrutinized the unjust role race and ethnicity have in students' chronic absenteeism in a study with data from both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. EdSource details the findings of this data stating, "Black students missed an average of 13.2 days in school in 2018-19, compared to 9.1 days among white students" (2020). American Indian and Latino students also had a higher rate of absences in both 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 than white students. California's Department of Education also collected data focused on the percentages of students excused and unexcused absences per year by race and ethnicity. Excused absences are categorized as those that are dismissed by the school as legitimate, and students receive no pushback or discipline as a result of missing school. In contrast, unexcused absences are seen as unjustified and will result in some type of disciplinary action or rebuttal. When dissecting the absentee data, the California Department of Education (2020) found that the absences of white students were categorized as excused more often than the absences of Black and American Indian students. This causes a stigma within the education system centered on the belief that students of color are more chronically absent than their white peers when in fact they are being coded unfairly as unexcused. These students of color were often absent from school to provide childcare to younger siblings, translate appointments for parents or guardians, or transport family members around town- absences typical for low-socioeconomic status students. Although these absences are necessary for students of color and their families, the school system continually deems them "unexcused" and penalizes students accordingly. Rather than finding community-based solutions like affordable public transportation fees and translators in doctor's offices, schools implement discipline policies that further remove students from school like suspension protocols. Programs like ACE work to actively remove these "punishments" and

provide a positive and supportive atmosphere for students of color who have been neglected by the school system.

Moreover, it can also be noted that students with disabilities are "1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent than students without disabilities" (U.S Department of Education, 2016). Thus, those students with learning disabilities fall further behind as a result of their chronic absenteeism. Special education teachers and advocates are unable to diagnose and support students with disabilities if the students are not properly present at school which is an issue many the Princeton High School teachers faced regarding the ACE students. Many of the students presented signs of learning disabilities but were never fully tested or diagnosed as the Special Education team was unable to reach them for days at a time. Looking back at these students' attendance and academic statistics, this issue could have exacerbated the overall lack of academic work being completed and understood by the students.

Lastly, The Department of Education's research found that high schools in our country have the highest rate of chronic absenteeism when compared to elementary, middle, and other levels of education. "More than 20% of students in high school are chronically absent," which highlights the importance of students enrolling in the ACE Program during their middle school career if they are exhibiting truancy issues (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's research corroborates this statistic after polling schools across their state between 2018-2019 and finding the percentage of students who are chronically absent rising significantly once students enter high school. With a median rate of 12.9% across all grade levels, 22.3% of twelfth graders are chronically absent during a given school year (2022). Upon entering high school, the pressures imposed on students related to choosing a college and a career are crippling, especially for students of color whose

socio-economic status poses issues related to the costs associated with preparing for college. Students in these categories may be absent from school as a result of these pressures. High school students of low socioeconomic standing may also be absent from school to be present at a part-time job to support their families. During the school year, ACE employees delivered food and other resources to the households of the mentees to provide for their families, so the mentees did not have to work or visit the food pantry during school hours. Understanding the intricacies behind why high schoolers are absent from school allows programs like ACE to ensure students are being enrolled before high school and provide resources to their families so their children can stay involved and dedicated to their academics.

A major strength of these studies done by the Department of Education, the California Department of Education, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is their attention to the categorization of chronically absent students rather than simple polling to obtain a generalized percentile. With these details related to race and ethnicity, social class, and grade level, school systems and programs like ACE can pinpoint exact populations of students to help recover their attendance and address the inequities causing these discrepancies. Without these details, schools may lay culpability on the students themselves and their lack of commitment to their academic engagement rather than on the inequity of how different races and ethnicities are condemned in American school systems and the ramifications of living in the low-socioeconomic class in this country. Another strength of these studies is their quantifiable results. By acquiring percentages of chronically absent students categorized by race/ethnicity, grade level, and ability, school systems and programs like ACE will be able to examine if protocols and installations are making a difference in the numbers. With percentages, we can visibly decipher any changes in the chronic absenteeism rate in our school systems.

Although the research done by the Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Education does highlight major discrepancies in attendance related to race and grade, they fail to address how students' socioeconomic status impacts their ability to attend school and remain present throughout the majority of the school days. The California Department of Education does briefly explain reasons why students in the low-socioeconomic bracket would miss school but fail to be coded as "excused" on their attendance. However, it fails to quantify the role of socioeconomic status related to chronic absenteeism. Attendance Works, an organization rooted in promoting strategies to equalize access to education, found that "Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent- and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school" (2018). By pairing this inequity with a quantity, programs like ACE can better address the need for aid in communities with chronically absent students.

An Alternative Route for Chronically Absent Students: Trade Schools

Although these inequities rooted in racial and socioeconomic bias are creating an optimal environment for chronic absenteeism to thrive in our school system and affect vulnerable populations of students, trade schools and careers offer a solution for these students to ensure their success and stability despite their attendance during their primary education. The sources analyzed and connected below address the stigma associated with trade schools and careers, demonstrate the need for trade students to enroll and commit to trading schools after high school, and provide recommendations for how programs like ACE can assist students when deciding which trade to enter.

The following sources work to reverse our country's negative reaction and biased attitude toward trade schools and explicate how they offer students, typically those who were left behind by the primary education system, an alternate, and beneficial career path. In America, a heavy emphasis is placed on attending college and obtaining a college degree as early as elementary school. Administrators, teachers, and parents alike associate college with success and any other career path with failure while other nations do not equate typical 4-year colleges as the only viable options after high school. As journalist Meg St-Esprit explicates in her piece "The Stigma of Choosing Trade Schools," "European nations prioritize vocational training for many students, with half of the secondary students (the equivalent of U.S high-school students) participating in vocational programs. In the United States, since the passage of the 1944 GI Bill, the college has been pushed over vocational education. This college-for-all narrative has been emphasized for decades as *the* pathway to success and stability…" (2019). Unfortunately, for those who push this "college-for-all" agenda, it has been shown recently that over 30% of students who go on to attend college are ill-prepared and "require remedial courses and half of all employers feel that their potential workers lack essential traits…" (McQueen, n.d.). If non-chronically absent students are entering colleges without the proper knowledge base, how are we to eliminate and ignore trade schools as a path for chronically absent students with a much larger academic gap? St-Esprit goes on to explain most students in high school do not consider or are unaware of trade schools and careers as a result of the negative connotations associated with these alternate paths. Some states like California are working to undo this stigma by reenergizing the vocational career sector of their economy as "viable industries with respectable reputations" (McQueen, n.d.). If our education system would embrace this option, specifically for chronically absent students, not only would the students benefit career-wise but would benefit from an economic standpoint as

well. "Vocational and technical education tends to cost significantly less than a traditional four-year college" (St-Esprit, 2019). Most chronically absent students come from low-socioeconomic communities; thus, highlighting the post-primary school path of vocational training programs and apprenticeships for chronically absent students provides them with a more affordable tertiary education option and eliminates further economic insecurity via loan payments and debt as a result of these loans. Attending a trade school also allows chronically absent, low-socioeconomic status students a chance at a "school-to-work" career path. Upon receiving their certifications and qualifications in a trade like plumbing, electrical, carpentry, etc., students will be able to obtain a job quickly and without the need for further training. As Holland and DeLuca explain, "These disadvantaged young adults are searching for any stable job opportunities they can find; their family circumstances, overcrowded housing, and financial vulnerability create an urgency to launch quickly into work" (2016). Trade school and careers allow chronically absent students this guarantee of a paid position, most times with benefits, directly after school. This is unlike any post-4-year college job market with an overly competitive, uncertain "school-to-work connection" (Holland & DeLuca, 2016).

This research also reveals and exposes the need for trade students to ensure the future viability of trade professions. St-Esprit (2016) uncovers the overt need for available skilled workers and tradespeople in the job market stating, "Trade school enrollment has also risen, from 9.6 million students in 1999 to 16 million in 2014. This resurgence came after a decline in vocational education in the 1980s and '90s. That dip created a shortage…". This shortage of tradesmen ensures chronically absent students finishing trade school will be recruited to work directly after graduating and obtaining certification. Unfortunately, primary education often exploits students by only preparing them for a 4-year college and attempting to bolster their

resumes for this tertiary education path. However, this type of manipulation is harmful to trade professions as "it disregards a large sector of the population who also need preparation for their vocations" (McQueen, n.d.). When studying a group of low-socioeconomic students during their post-primary school exploration into trade schools and the workforce, Holland and DeLuca (2016) also found, "In contrast to previous research, we find that the youth in our study have quite modest ambitions and look to for-profit trade schools as the quickest and most direct route to work. However, youth receive little information or guidance to support such post-secondary transitions". Thus, even if chronically absent students are considering a career in a specified trade, none of their core or mandatory classes are geared towards preparation for hands-on learning or craftsmanship. Again, this is a direct result of the stigmatization of trade schools; "The demand for skilled workers is simply not being met…Many factors may have led to this but one of them must undeniably be the underlying, and often blatant, bias that schools, parents, and media often have against work in a trade" (McQueen, n.d.). However, the education system fails to recognize and accept that there are certain undeniable luxuries associated with highly-recruited-for positions. As St-Esprit (2019) states, "The manufacturing, infrastructure, and transportation fields are all expected to grow in the coming years- and many of those jobs likely won't require a four-year degree". Obtaining a reliable, well-paid occupation with benefits, as most trade professions are, without the requirement of a 4-year degree could potentially change the "failure" outlook on trade professions. With the amount of college debt accumulated by students today and the intensity of the job market thereafter, "exchanging our biased favor of university for a more balanced and inclusive approach to education is guaranteed to be a profitable, effective, and successful trade" (McQueen, n.d.). By enlisting chronically absent students to apply and graduate from vocational schools and enter the trade profession, not only

are they set forth on an optimal career path towards success and stability, but the profession is preserved and can continue to offer these students a viable tertiary education option.

Ultimately, these sources work to provide recommendations for programs across the country like ACE, demonstrating how to transition students from primary schools to trade schools, despite the education system's failure to do so. Brown and Talbot detailed the purpose and procedures of the Trades Awareness Program (TAP) in Northern Canada; TAP effectively carries out and connects the intention of ACE, to assist underprivileged and chronically absent students in the Princeton community, and the intention of this research, to prove trade schools are a viable tertiary education option for these students. "The Trades Awareness Program (TAP) brings interested Grade 8-12 students from the outlying communities…to experience a series of short courses in several different trades. For each week of sessions, the partnership organizes transportation, meals and accommodation in the student residences, and instruction for 20-50 students" (Brown and Talbot, 2020). Since the ACE Program has already homed in on the Princeton community and developed a system for recruiting chronically absent students, employees would need to begin reaching out to trade schools in the surrounding area to partner with. Mentors and program coordinators alike would be able to provide transportation and accommodations as this was common during other events throughout the year. Brown and Talbot go on to explain, "TAP quickly expanded from a one-week pilot into a three-part program in which students can earn up to three credits toward high-school graduation" (2020). The opportunity to make up for credits lost during their prolonged absence from school would provide ACE mentees with an incentive for showing up to school and this program afterward. Mentees would be improving their high school transcript while also bolstering their experience for an eventual career in a trade profession. TAP's model also ensures students are exposed to all

different trades to understand the expectations and day to day tasks of each; "Students spend one full day in each of four different trades…students have the opportunity to choose one-day workshops in carpentry, plumbing, cooling, electrical, welding, computer diagnosis and repair, heavy equipment technology, and environment and natural resources technology" (Brown & Talbot, 2020). The ACE Program would need to ensure partnering trade schools gave mentees this same exposure opportunity. As a final recommendation, the ACE Program would need to prioritize explaining and aiding mentees throughout the process of choosing and applying for different trade schools and professions. In his research, McQueen found, "Marketing the programs to be more attractive to prospective students and simplifying the process of applying for, completing and using their qualifications have been some of the more practical efforts…" (n.d.). Across all of the accumulated research, it is believed the majority of high school students are hesitant or do not apply to trade schools as a result of a lack of understanding of how applications and qualifications to function. Typically, students are taught how to craft resumes and portfolios for 4-year colleges rather than trade schools which creates this hesitancy. Holland and DeLuca found most of the students included in their research "lacked cohesive career plans and demonstrated multiple and competing ambitions" (2016). To remedy this uncertainty and gap in information, ACE mentors and program coordinators should educate mentees, alongside the trade professionals partnering with the program, to guarantee they have all the necessary details associated with trade schools, trade professions, applications, qualifications, cost, and post-graduation work placement.

The most notable strength of these trade school/ trade profession sources is the relevant research and trials used as evidence. All the researchers concluded from either their research by working closely with students who were choosing or choosing to enroll in a trade school or

closely examining the research of a program they were not originally associated with. Infusing their research with details from the stories of real students, most of whom were deeply affected by their low-socioeconomic status like the ACE mentees, allowed for the conclusions to truly be rooted in real experience. From this kind of qualitative data, the ACE Program will be able to uncover the value of introducing and preparing mentees for trade schools and trade professions after their time at Princeton High School.

Unfortunately, this research failed to provide the long-term effects of this push for enrollment in trade schools and professions for low-income students which was a major weakness. This gap in the research leaves questions like "Do these students go on to live stable lives and provide for their families after entering a trade professional?" and "Is the students' academic and attendance record held against them or create barriers for them throughout their time in trade school?" unanswered. Programs like ACE and the NJ Bonner Foundation need to know and understand the long-term effects of these partnerships with trade schools and how they affect students' lives before recruiting and offering this path. Without this part of the research, the ACE Program may fail to convince Princeton High School to allow for this kind of opportunity for their chronically absent student population.

Intervention Programs for Minimizing Chronic Absenteeism in Schools

School-Based Programs

A prominent study that clearly shows support for the intervention of programs like ACE in school communities that suffer from chronic absenteeism was one conducted by the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School. In this article, Battling Chronic Absenteeism, Kim Nauer details the efforts made by Patricia Mitchell, an elementary school principal in Jamaica,

Queens, to combat chronic absenteeism in her school by employing "success mentors" in her school. These "success mentors" were a part of former Mayor Bloomberg's fight against chronic absenteeism. By introducing this intervention, "Mitchell and her team drove down chronic absenteeism almost 10 percentage points, from an average of 26% in June 2011 to 17% in June 2012. P.S. 48 also climbed academically from the bottom 10% of the city to a respectable place in the middle of the pack, ascending from the 9th percentile in 2010-11 to the 48th percentile in 2012-13" (Nauer, 2016). As a result of the understaffed and overworked nature of schools and school systems, chronic absenteeism is often looked at as an "operational issue"; "School leaders have, of course, always been aware of student attendance, but tracking it was viewed mostly as paperwork" (Nauer, 2016). Without a delegated group or board of leaders to specifically address and create a nuanced solution to the issue of absenteeism in their school community, attendance is held in the same regard as budgeting or scheduling. This demonstrates the necessity of "success mentors" or programs like ACE to work in conjunction with students and the school community to address attendance issues. As proven by this study, "A school's rate of chronic absenteeism was more useful for predicting a school's test scores than other common measures, including the school's percentage of students in special education, English language learners, or students receiving free or reduced lunch" (Nauer, 2016). Rather than dismissing truancy issues as merely a byproduct of social factors like race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, this research suggests schools and communities use rates of chronic absenteeism as a way to quantify the success of the school and the education being provided to students. "In other words, if a school has 10% more chronically absent students than another similar school, it is statistically likely to have 13% fewer students who score proficient on New York's annual achievement tests" (Nauer, 2016). P.S. 48 and other schools involved in this research, "'call parents to let them know about

their child's absenteeism and leave it at that. Principals could be using this opportunity to ask parents what kind of help their child might need to get to school regularly and succeed'" (Nauer, 2016). Princeton High School alerted parents about their students' chronic absenteeism as well, but they also made sure ACE Program coordinators were aware of the students being affected by truancy issues. Thus, ACE was able to provide students with this "help" Nauer refers to. Without the ACE Program, this notice of chronic absenteeism would stop at notice and fail to set change in motion for these students. For many schools, the only intervention in place is to calculate their "average daily attendance" figure which "enables administrators to see what percentage of students are present on any given day but offers no information on which students- or how many students- are racking up too many absences" (Nauer, 2016). Without a supplementary intervention like the "success mentors" or the ACE Program, this figure simply stays a figure, failing to provide school leaders or community members with a way to target chronically absent students and begin to help them recover their attendance. To create effective, substantial change, P.S. 48's "success mentors" were able to divide "the school's students, touching base with their kids at least twice a week and organizing monthly attendance events and prizes for kids who showed improvement" (Nauer, 2016). This structure which proved to be highly effective is the exact structure of the ACE Program. Mentors are constantly in contact with their chronically absent mentees and ACE Program coordinators organize events and activities to consistently engage these students in their school community and the Princeton community. After this study at P.S. 48 took place, "an evaluation conducted by Balfanz and his team at Johns Hopkins University gave the project high marks, especially for using success mentors to connect with students and their families. A student's success mentor was charged with checking in with the student frequently and working with school staff to resolve problems that were keeping kids

from coming to school regularly" (Nauer, 2016). Although the ACE Program actively and effectively works with the families of the mentees throughout the year by inviting them to events and keeping them up to date with their child's progress, this intervention strategy is missing this connectivity between the program and the school system. On top of this, P.S. 48 offered an attendance teacher. The attendance teacher's role was to visit chronically absent students' homes. Due to the teacher having a teaching license and knowledge of the neighborhood, the teacher worked with 8 other schools in the program. Although a beneficial idea, the attendance teacher was only able to visit the more serious cases of chronically absent students because there was only one attendance teacher like that. The interventions at P.S. 48 gained major success and traction as a result of getting "everyone who was working on attendance…in the same room on a regular basis to review progress and assess problems" (Nauer, 2016). The ACE Program needs to incorporate regular meetings between program coordinators and school leaders to address the issue of chronic absenteeism from both the school and community front to ensure the optimal amount of support for these students. Even after Mitchell's initial success, her school's rate of chronic absenteeism became to rise as "it's also hard to sustain a passion for dealing with absenteeism when, inevitably, other priorities or crises arise…The frequent attendance meetings she used to host went to the wayside…New York City also has stopped providing outside success mentors to Mitchell's school" (Nauer, 2016). By incorporating biweekly or monthly meetings between ACE Program coordinators and Princeton High School administrators, the longevity of this intervention will be strengthened and be able to provide chronically absent students with consistent support.

The study was designed by Mayor Bloomberg's educational task force to track and review how chronic absenteeism affected the students within the New York City school system.

To establish the task forces' success, data was collected by the schools' leadership committees and administrations and transferred to the task force for analysis. The data was then turned into trend lines portraying the percentages of students who were chronically absent using multilevel regression models. The data, collected at different moments in time, was then separated into 4 groups based on the year the schools were incorporated into the intervention program. Group 1 included 25 schools that started the first year of the program, 2010-2011. Group 2 was comprised of 25 schools that started the second year of the intervention program, 2011-2012. Group 3 consisted of 50 schools that started the third year of the intervention program, 2012-2013. Lastly, Group 4 was the control group. Group 4 was composed of 46 schools that did not participate in the intervention program but had a similar chronic absentee rate, free or reduced lunch eligibility, and limited English proficiency. These groups were formed as such in order to display the trend of chronic absentee rates from before and after the implementation of the intervention program; this study was also created to compare Groups 1-3 to Group 4 so researchers could determine a notable difference in the intervention's impact. To determine the success of the program, the task force wanted to reduce chronic absenteeism in NYC schools by 1.5 percentage points. For example, a successful intervention campaign would have lowered a school's chronic absenteeism from 11% to 9.5%. The results of the study of this intervention program proved to be statistically significant in reducing the number of students suffering from chronic absenteeism; all three groups that participated in the intervention program from 2010-11 to 2012-13 performed better when reducing rates of chronic absenteeism than the control schools in Group 4. Chronically absent students within the program who received a mentor benefited from the mentoring program which helped them improve their overall attendance by 5 percentage points. This statistic well exceeded the expectations of the task force. Students who were overage and

chronically absent improved their attendance rates by 6.5 percentage points. These students also improved academically, earning 1.3 more credits during the intervention. The grade point averages of these students also increased by 0.8%, and these students were 17% less likely to continue to be severely chronically absent. In regard to the mentorship aspect of the intervention, 10,804 students were given a mentor. As a result of the mentorship program, there was a total of 92,277 recovered school days. This amount was accrued by all of the students participating in the mentorship program. A survey was also given out to 1,293 mentored students to better understand their views and opinions about their experiences within the mentoring program. The results of this survey showed that students did have a positive experience with their mentor (91%) and having a mentor helped students improve their attendance (75%). Although the results show the significant success of the task force intervention program, there were issues regarding how the program was handled and its future considerations. One of these issues was how the task force handled middle schoolers within the schools included in the intervention. The data collected shows that elementary, middle, and high school students participating in the mentorship program responded differently to the Success Mentos. The overrepresentation of Success Mentors in middle schools proved to have an adverse effect on the participating students. Students who worked with a mentor during the school year actually remained chronically absent rather than improving their attendance. However, in elementary and high schools, the data proved the Success Mentors did improve the attendance of the students they were working with throughout the school year. Therefore, this intervention program should approach the middle school task force differently than the other age levels in the future. Also, emphasizing prevention rather than intervention would be a huge step in preventing more students from becoming chronically absent. Schools should closely monitor students' attendance

to catch the change before it becomes a major issue. Allocating resources for the schools to promote this idea essential for chronic absenteeism to decrease in these schools (Balfanz & Byrnes, n.d.).

Promoting Familial Involvement in the Intervention Process

The next study aims to provide researched insight into how family and community involvement impacts chronic absentee rates. The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) is a research group with John Hopkins University which partners with schools in the surrounding area to help them conduct research. To select schools that will provide the most accurate and focused results according to the specific research being done by the group, NNPS sends out baseline surveys to all of the partnering schools. Once the schools fill out and hand back the surveys, the NNPS weeds through the schools' responses and selects the schools most conducive for the research being conducted. In this case, the NNPS selected schools for the 2000-2001 school year that established a commitment to and prioritized family and community involvement. After being chosen to participate, the selected schools were expected to provide information regarding the percentage of students identified as chronically absent, or students who missed twenty or more days of school in the 1999-2000 school year. Additionally, the schools were required to present information about the fourteen attendance-focused activities the schools already have in place and offered at their school during the 2001 school year. These activities were broken up into different categories. The first category was parenting practices: workshops for kids to get to school, providing contracts to parents to get their kids to school, and home visits. The next category was communication practices: providing students attendance records online, providing families with contact information for the school, announcing students with perfect attendance via a newsletter, and having a parent orientation that breaks down

attendance policies and expectations. The next category was collaborating with the community: having speakers discuss the importance of attendance to students and providing chronically absent students with a mentor. Volunteering was another category that worked to offer families the opportunity to attend attendance award ceremonies. The last category focused on the students: offering after-school programs, awards, incentives for improved attendance, contact information for a counselor, and a truant or court officer present within the school. At the end of the study, the schools that participated received a follow-up survey one year later. This survey asked the respondents to rate the effectiveness of each practice that was implemented to improve student attendance using the 4-point Likert scale. This scale ranges from "not effective at all" (0) to "highly effective" (3). Of the respondents that completed both the baseline and follow-up survey were 39 schools: 29 elementary and ten secondary schools. Of the 39 schools, there were nine rural schools, ten large urban schools, nine smaller urban schools, and eleven suburban schools. The schools varied in size, with an average school size of 650 students. The schools collectively had 51% of students receiving free or reduced lunches and 20% of families had English as their second language. After gathering the data on chronic absenteeism from the 2000-2001 school year, the study showed a decrease in chronic absenteeism in the following school year. Overall, there was a 0.5% decrease in chronic absenteeism in all of the participating schools. The secondary schools showed a 0.4% increase in chronic absenteeism but elementary schools did show a decrease of 0.8%. The highest rated practice to lower attendance regarding the survey was providing awards and incentives to students with a score of 2.45, and the lowest rated practice was introducing parents to the school expectations and policies involving attendance with a score of 1.97. By using regression analysis, NNPS was able to compare family and community involvement on chronic absentee levels. The main results showed a correlation

between an increase in communication between the schools and families and a decrease in chronic absentee levels. Results also showed a relation between the implementation of the 14 practices and lower rates of chronic absenteeism. The three practices which proved to lower chronic absenteeism the most significantly were introducing parents to the school expectations and policies involving attendance, announcing students with perfect attendance through a newsletter, and providing chronically absent students with a mentor. Although this study proves family involvement does lower rates of chronic absenteeism within schools, there were issues with aspects of the study. One major issue was underrepresentation when selecting which schools were qualified to participate in the surveys. The study results would have been less biased if more secondary and high schools were included. Including at least twenty of each school level would have created a more widespread set of results. The way schools were selected to participate in the study was also concerning as schools were asked to volunteer. This severely reduced the variability of the participating schools. Carefully selecting schools based on the practices put in place to involve families and the community in the schools' systems would have positively implemented the research surrounding the effectiveness of the 14 attendance-focused activities. This would have ensured more variability in the survey responses as those schools may have had greater and more diverse insight into these practices (Sheldon & Epstein, 2008).

Mentoring Programs

The final intervention examines a mentoring program focused on the "high risk" student population centered within the school building. The questions that this study sought to discuss were: (1) is there a decrease in office referrals and/or unexcused absences for the students participating in the mentoring program? and (2) is there an improvement in the school correctness survey for the students participating in the mentoring program? To establish the

results, researchers sourced an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse junior high school with 1,148 students, grades seven to nine. The school counselors pooled 34 at-risk students ages 13 to 15 to participate in the student. The students were picked based on their high-rate of office referrals and unexcused absences: three to seven office referrals and seven unexcused absences. A student is subject to an office referral when they engage in disruptive behavior during the school day and need to meet with an authoritative figure to discuss their behavior and receive disciplinary actions like detention or suspension. These criteria were established as they are seen as ideal indicators for misbehavior and social maladjustment at school. Of the 34 students, 32 were willing to partake in the intervention. The 32 students were randomly assigned to be in the mentored group or control group in which students would not be offered a mentor. Within the mentored group, 56% of students were white, 44% of students were Hispanic, 19% of students were female, and 81% of students were male. Within the control group, 40% of students were white, 50% of students were Hispanic, 13% of students were male, and 87% of students were female. To select mentors to work with the mentored group, a pool of 62 staff members from the school were asked to join an information session. Afterward, thirteen staff members agreed to be mentors for the students in the intervention. Eleven of these staff members were female, and two of the staff members were male. The student/mentor pairs were chosen based on the mentor's preference. Mentors were allowed to be paired with students in their classes, but male mentors were only allowed to be paired with male students. To accommodate for the greater number of mentees than mentors, three female mentors were given a pair of mentees each. The mentoring program was implemented at the beginning of the third quarter of the school year and lasted until the end of the fourth quarter. Before the program began, the mentors took part in a four-week training session while the mentees took a school connectedness survey one week prior to the start

of the intervention. The school connectedness survey prompted the mentees to answer questions about their attitudes towards themselves, their peers, their teachers, and other adults in the school building. The purpose of this survey was to gain insight into the students' overall feelings about the school environment and their attitude towards those they interacted with in the building every day. During the first week of the intervention, the mentees and mentors discussed and came to an agreement on when to meet with one another. This time was then approved by the principal of the school and the mentees' families. Throughout the 18-week intervention program, the mentors and mentees came up with and carried out different activities which supported the attendance and behavior of the mentees. Any successful activities created were shared with the other mentors during the biweekly training refreshers, so mentors could share and collaborate throughout the duration of the program. At the end of the intervention period, the mentees office referrals and absences were collected, and the mentees completed the school connectedness survey again. The results showed a positive trend resulting from the mentoring intervention program the school offered when comparing the data before and after the intervention was implemented. In regard to office referrals before the intervention, both the mentored group and the control group accumulated an average of 5.93 office referrals in the first two quarters. After the intervention, students without a mentor had an average of 6.75 office referrals while students with a mentor had an average of 3.13 office referrals. In regard to student absences before the intervention, both the mentored group and the control group accrued an average of 8.07 absences. After the intervention, the control group showed an average 9.06 absences while the mentored group showed a reduction to 6.69. In regard to the school connectedness survey, the data was used to determine if there were any significant differences between the responses from the mentored group and the control group at the end of the intervention period. The results showed the

mentored students had a more positive attitude toward the school community and those within it based on how they responded to the post-intervention version of the school connectedness survey. Although this intervention did garner positive results, the issue presented in this intervention was the sample size of the control and mentoring groups. More students, as well as mentors, should be included in the intervention to gain a larger, more comprehensive understanding of the successes and weaknesses of the intervention. Another weakness of this research was only using one school to participate in the program; by having more schools participate, researchers would have a more diverse pool of students to survey and more results to analyze. Another issue with this intervention was the lack of explanation for the minute difference in total absences for students within the control group and students within the mentored group. More research should have been conducted to provide reasoning and recommendations to readers before the survey was published (Converse & Lignugaris-Kraft, 2009).

Host Agency:

ACE is a nonprofit organization under the Princeton Family YMCA. The organization functions at the lower level, serving the underprivileged youth of Princeton, New Jersey. Targeting chronic absenteeism in high schoolers and middle schoolers, students must accept that there is an issue and continue to compete with themselves and their barriers to success, intending to excel in their education and extracurriculars; creating the acronym ACE, Accept Compete Excel.

ACE plays the role of providing the teenagers with a mentorship that can help guide them, a mentor who is ideally experienced and compassionate "because we all need deep interpersonal bonds to thrive" (Roseborough, 2022). For many teenagers, this is a difficult outcome to achieve

because there are challenging circumstances that inhibit them from competing in their daily routine to excel. The mentor is there to assist in their daily life so that school is not an option, but an opportunity. Having the opportunity to receive an education to accelerate their career is what will help them to excel. The issue that plagues these students is they grapple with chronic absenteeism. Not attending their classes hinders their chance of obtaining the knowledge necessary to pass their class. Being chronically absent does not necessarily mean they hate school and do not have the drive to flourish. Many of the teenagers in our program are low-income, food insecure, and are going through challenging scenarios at home. The mentors not only offer advice and help with classes, but they also support them in their home life.

The teenagers that have been qualified to join ACE are mostly grades 9 to 12 at Princeton High School but are looking to incorporate younger grades from Princeton middle school and other public schools in the Princeton Community. The school's counselors and social workers work with the students and families to determine if additional resources are needed and will qualify the students to be enrolled in ACE. At the start of the program, boys were only being enrolled in ACE but are now expanding to girls. This will allow for ACE to not be generalized to just boys being chronically absent, but inclusive to all students. They come from diverse backgrounds with the majority being Haitian and Latinx. The goal is to continue enrolling qualified students into the program to help as many students as possible while also growing the program (Roseborough, 2022).

Regarding the mentors, they are mostly from the Princeton area but are in other locations across New Jersey. Their age range is around 35-68, with the majority of them being on the older side. We have been in the process of recruiting younger mentors into ACE so that the mentees can feel more connected to them. The mentors are primarily teachers or are retired teachers,

which allows them to be comfortable with the teenagers because they are familiar with how to handle situations involving high school students. We are recruiting mentors from diverse backgrounds in careers and races as well. It is ideal to have a 1-to-1 pairing but some mentors have two mentees because of a lack of mentors.

The students have the opportunity to be paired with a mentor because of the funding that is provided to ACE. The Princeton Area Community Foundation's (PACF) All Kids Thrive initiative focuses "on strengthening the educational pipeline to support underserved residents from age zero to 25" (Valentin, 2021). After receiving donations from generous individuals and other connections, PACF can provide grants to other organizations that target different issues their community faces. In 2019, PACF donated to over 400 charitable funds with a total of $17 million delivered in grants, with education being the majority of the funds delivered with 21% (Shackelford & Nuno, 2020). In 2018, the PACF All Kids Thrive granted 10 programs a total of $3 million to keep kids in school. A whopping $300,000 was allocated to the Princeton YMCA to start the ACE program, creating the Princeton Stronger Together Partnership that includes the Princeton YMCA, Corner House Behavioral Health, and The Corella and Bertram F Bonner Foundation at the two major schools of Princeton High School and Witherspoon Middle School (PACF, 2021).

The Princeton YMCA is a non-profit organization that provides the Princeton community with resources to promote a person's quality of life through spiritual, mindfulness, and body activities. They provide exercise classes in their gym and pool as well as recreational swimming and exercising, outdoor and indoor basketball courts for all ages to congregate and play and become very involved with the community through their organizations (Princeton YMCA, 2022). Many YMCAs were formed in the late 1800s, but the YMCA in Princeton was founded in

1908 by the Princeton University Professor Dr. Walter Mead Rankin. Starting as only white members, it soon included the Witherspoon YMCA to instill religious, mental, social, and physical advancement of the African American boys and girls' members of Princeton 1912; soon incorporated African Americans on the board in the early 1920s. In the early 80s, were started to be included in memberships and on the board of directors. Throughout the decades between and after, the Princeton YMCA has been a hub for people of all backgrounds to join together to learn, teach and share their values to improve the health of community members (Princeton YMCA, n.d)). As the home of ACE, the YMCA provides the opportunity for ACE to expand just as it did over the years. ACE is only secluded to a small population, but with the help of the YMCA and the vast connections offered to ACE through the YMCA, ACE can potentially become a major organization that reaches all areas of New Jersey. For all YMCAs to facilitate the program ACE or a similar program to it, chronic absenteeism can be better targeted as a public health issue and can be managed and treated effectively.

Corner House Behavioral Health is a medical center in the Princeton area. The goal of Corner House is to provide services that promote "an environment of change, awareness, honesty, and personal responsibility" (Tri-County ResourceNet, 2021). The Clinicians job is to not only provide patients with medical care, but to strengthen, understand, and accept the persons' issues and needs. This will then allow the individuals to bolster and prepare the necessary and accessible resources by promoting the fundamental values to be happier and healthier to live a better quality of life. Corner House is the outpatient service that focuses on the different stages of change to reshape behavioral problems as well as using cognitive behavioral therapy to teach the mentees for them to consistently practice interpersonal and self-management qualities. Corner House provides the ACE program with the necessary resources to promote the

health and happiness of the mentees. Although not as hands-on as the mentors, having the necessary resources of someone the mentees can go to prevent chronic or treat acute mental health issues is vital for their development and quality of life.

A major partner in assisting the ACE program is The Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation (Bonner). It was created in 1989 when Bertram and Corella Bonner hired Wayne Meisel as the president of the Bonner Foundation. Their goal is to "improve the lives of individuals and communities by helping meet the basic needs of nutrition and educational opportunity" (Boner Foundation, n.d). Bonner believes that colleges are key stakeholders in addressing community issues. Bonner takes advantage of college students who are eager to make a difference in their communities by allowing students to be leaders. By being a leader, students can organize effective programs that can bolster a specific or general need for their community. Serving with Bonner, students can find something they are interested in to promote positive change. Working through the Bonner foundation, I was connected to ACE to work with chronically absent students in Princeton. It allowed me to better understand the students' situation, realizing that a student's situation is not the same as another. Many aspects of the students' lives were affected and were a factor in them becoming chronically absent from school. The Bonner foundation allowed me to help make a change in their life and to submerge myself in the student's mindset.

During my internship experience, I was fortunate enough to have two individuals who are experienced and knowledgeable in their field: Robert Hackett as my supervisor, and Michael Roseborough as my preceptor. Robert Hackett joined the foundation in 1992 as the Vice President and the Director of the Bonner Scholars Program. He assumed his current role as President in 2010. He started his work with Telesis Corporation in Washington DC as an

affordable housing director, eventually developing the program Campus Outreach Opportunity
League (COOL). COOL set the tone for his rise in the Boner Foundation, where COOL's
objective was to national service and student leadership, like the Bonner Scholars Program.
Working with youth developing in public policies and evidence-based programs has always been
his desire and aided in my study of chronically absent students looking into trade schools (Boner
Foundation, 2022). Michael Roseborough is the program director of ACE. He started the
program ACE at the Princeton YMCA and has run it since it starts in 2019. Even with the issues
that COVID presented, he has been able to continue communication between stakeholders,
mentors, mentees, and their families with the goal of expansion. Not just the person in charge of
the program, he is the mentee's role model, as someone who has successfully beaten obstacles to
starting a program that helps underprivileged students.

Internship Experience:

Working with ACE was an unforgettable experience. Seeing another side of people's
experiences and being close to their lives outside of school allowed me to be in their shoes.
When first deciding what internship, I wanted to join, I wanted to do something different from
my bachelor's internship. I was in an organization that used gleaning, a form of harvesting extra
produce from farmers, as a solution to food insecurity. By gleaning for crops, we were able to
provide food-insecure populations with nutritious foods. Using the same idea, offering
something to an individual in the hopes of making a positive impact, I found the most ideal
organization through AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps offers high-quality internships that target
different public health-related topics such as food insecurity, adult education, mental health in
children, etc. They provide individuals of all ages the opportunity to assist in managing an
organization so that underprivileged people have access to some kind of care and ACE was one

of the many organizations to offer an internship. Welcomed with open arms by Mike Roseborough and the rest of the Princeton YMCA staff, we worked together to spread awareness and coordinate events for the chronically absent students. With this, multiple successes and challenges were established that played a major part in my internship experience.

Successes

One of the major successes of my internship was I successfully managed communication between the mentors and mentees within my leadership role. My position allowed me to be the person that people go to when they have a question or if they have a suggestion. Mike and I would discuss what we plan on accomplishing for this week and month, then I would relay the information to the mentors and mentees about what's happening. If there were any updates in the mentee's grades or attendance throughout the year, I would contact the mentor through email, and we would discuss any trends as well as have a solution to the situation. When having our dinner, I was in charge of sending any updates on the date, time, and location as well as handling the food. The dinner is a time where we would be able to all get together, mentors, mentees, and the mentees' families, to celebrate each person's successes throughout the month.

My success in my leadership role was aided by my knowledge and learning of different programs such as Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, Basecamp, and Canva. These programs were vital for my role during my internship. Excel and Sheets are similar programs, they both offer the user an efficient and effective method to organize data. The main difference between them is that Sheets allows multiple users to edit and work on the document with other users live. One of my roles and objectives was to collect data regarding the mentee's grades and attendance. With these two programs, I was able to neatly depict the mentees' grades and attendance how I see fit. I also

had different pages that showed different information relating to the mentees and mentors such as their family information and their service hours that were displayed appropriately on the pages I created. Canva was another program used throughout my internship experience. I have used Canva throughout my college career to create colorful and informative infographics. ACE allowed me to use Canva again to condense the information I gathered on the excel and sheets document to be presented to different stakeholders. Basecamp was a major program used as our communication platform. One of my major roles was to send different events and updates weekly to maintain our relations with the mentors. The mentors could send messages back to us and other mentors to ask questions and even if they had any news or updates, they wanted to share. Over time, we felt that it was important to also maintain relations with the families of the mentees. I created another page for the families to receive messages on. Due to many of the families having English as their second language, I was tasked with translating our message into Spanish and Haitian Creole to guarantee our messages will reach them for them to understand.

Being in ACE allowed me to successfully execute major events related to the program like luncheons and other opportunities for mentors to connect with mentees, and for them to connect with the other mentees. ACE hosts a dinner every month for the mentees, their families, and the mentors. We had it outside when the weather was warm and sunny, with delicious foods from different locations in Princeton. This was our opportunity to get together and celebrate each other's accomplishments and get to know each other better. Communicating through technology was effective but not ideal to understand the mentees' situations. Seeing them and speaking to the mentees and mentors in person gave everyone a better chance to get to know each other better and express themselves. Another event we organized that I feel was the most important is our Paths to Success. Paths to Success was designed to introduce our mentees to individuals who are

from a minority group that has overcome their struggles and eventually start a business or worked in a major company. These professionals are examples of regular people who have suffered and endured many challenging circumstances but despite that became successful. They are shown to be examples of professionals who are from a minority group but became successful. We hope that this can encourage the mentees to be motivated to do well in school to break out of the cruel cycle they were forced into. Another event we started was our Tuesday meetups. Every other Tuesday, Mike and I would meet with the kids to home in on what's going on in their life currently and what they want to do after High School. We felt that a lot of the mentees have been misguided throughout their high school years and want to provide them with educated discussions about different paths they can take. Many of them had a goal set for themselves, but it was unrealistic given their grades, attendance, and our understanding of them. After meeting with some of the mentees, I felt it was best to expand outside of college but to look at trade schools for their careers.

Challenges

As well as successes, challenges existed throughout my internship experience. One challenge that inhibited efforts for an effective experience was the lack of communication between the ACE program and teachers within the Princeton Public School district. ACE not only focuses on their attendance but their academics. We have access to the mentee's PowerSchool for us to monitor their grades and attendance for each class. For assignments and attendance, teachers have the option to write a note that describes the assignment, why the mentee received that grade, or if there need to be further steps because of missed assignments. Although this is a great tool, most teachers do not utilize this tool. Without a note, we have issues with how to handle a situation in class because we do not know the full details. This lack

of effort by the teachers to provide some form of feedback poses issues. It is important to have the teachers fill in the notes so that the parents, students, and we can determine what the issue is. Of course, the students should be able to communicate with us about their schoolwork, but many of them do not care. Having the teachers provide guidance and communication through PowerSchool or directly to us and aid in the student's academics.

Another challenge that presented itself was the constant restriction of events because of COVID-19. With the students already having issues attending classes and events in person, COVID-19 made things more difficult to have events. All the events we hosted were on zoom. For certain meetings and events like staff meetings and mentor meetings, having the meeting online worked smoothly, although with a few network hiccups. When we had an event online with the mentees, many of them had issues logging on or felt like they did not need to attend the event. This issue leads to the third challenge: lack of participation from some mentees because of transportation, scheduling, and commitment to the program. Due to COVID restrictions combined with the mentee's deficiency of motivation, events and meetings were not successful. Every Wednesday, we had a professional who is of similar background to the mentees, join a zoom meeting to discuss their life and answer questions. The attendance of ACE mentees was extremely low. The mentees did not take advantage of at least listening to what these professionals have gone through and how they succeeded. This would have provided them with a great opportunity to see that it is possible to do and be great in life even with a disadvantaged starting point. We started the Tuesday meetups when the COVID restrictions were loosened. We sent messages to the mentees, mentors, and parents. Even with all the messages, only two mentees showed up.

I would say that as well as COVID-19 having a negative influence on the mentees, so did the connection the mentees and the mentors had. Their lack of connection because of the difference in their background, as well as age played a detrimental role in the mentee's involvement. As an organization, ACE provided whatever was needed for the mentees to thrive, it was up to the mentees to take advantage of it. However, not having the proper mentor was evident because the mentees ignored their mentors' calls and not being as involved as we would hope. We started to focus our efforts on finding new mentors, primarily of similar backgrounds and younger. We met a teacher in the Princeton community who was the first generation from Mexico. She was able to communicate with the mentee's families who spoke Spanish effortlessly. Including individuals like this mentor will help the ACE program become more effective in promoting connections between the mentees.

Goals and Objectives

My first goal under my foundational competency was to assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities' health by creating a survey for the mentees about their interests to better understand what they enjoy gearing them towards a career in which they can excel in. I decided to survey that the mentees will fill out to determine what they enjoy through Google Forms. I made a survey in a "would you rather…?" style to be easily shared, understood, and tracked (see Figure A1). I provided the mentees with two options that they can choose from. Each option is geared towards a profession such as plumbing or electrician. I did not directly say electrician or plumbing, I provided them with a task that described what an electrician or plumber would do. For example, one question was "would you rather install a ceiling fan for your neighbor or fix your neighbor's sink?". The first one was geared toward an electrician and the second option was geared toward a plumber. This gave them an idea of what each trade

would do in their day-to-day life. The second part of this survey I called "The Lightbulb

Company" (see Figure A3). I made The Lightbulb Company a new business that needs

employees to work for them. I described different positions that would need to be performed for

the company, all gearing towards a trade. I wanted to incorporate different trades in this example

that could be utilized in any company. All trades are needed in businesses, some that people

wouldn't typically think of. For example: "Fix any issues that revolve around the trucks for

transportation (brakes, carburetor, engine, oil, etc)". This occupation would be a mechanic so

that the delivery of parts and products can continue so that sales continue to increase. The goal

was to rank the different positions from 1 to 10, 1 being most desirable and 10 being least

desirable, and to see where their interests lie. The ranking system would provide us with a better

idea of how they view each position and how they would want to contribute to their company.

This can also help paint a picture of how a company is run and all the positions and careers

available for them at a company.

At the end of the summer, I gave out the survey via email, text, basecamp, and at the

ACE Dinner to the mentors, their families, and of course the mentees. After reminding and

encouraging them to take the quiz, I received a total of 4 responses out of 11 mentees. For the

"would you rather…?" section (see Figure A2), the results were clear and provided the

information that was needed. We were able to see what kind of trade the students would want to

work in. An issue that stemmed from this was the inconsistency of their answers. Some of their

responses are geared towards electricians when compared to plumbers and vice versa. This

showed that they would want to do something that depends on the task. It would be a good idea

to have examples of the tasks under the trade profession at the end of the survey so they can see

which professions do what. For The Lightbulb Company, the results were not effective as I

hoped (see Figure A4). The mentees that responded did not understand how to rank the different occupations. Most of their responses were repeated ranks which does not aid in our understanding of which occupation they enjoy more. The alternative route would be to have clearer instructions for them and to have a better description of each occupation with more example tasks.

The second goal and objective for foundational competency that was accomplished were evaluating public health programs by analyzing the students' grades and attendance based on their PowerSchool for the 2020-2021 school year. The first step was creating an Excel spreadsheet (see Table A1). I wanted to make it as organized as possible to be clear for the person reading it to understand. All the sections I included are absences and lates, as well as the grades for math, English, social studies, and science. Classes like algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus were included in the math section. English included all English classes at their respective levels. Social studies included history, law, and economics. Science included biology, chemistry, and environmental sciences. The classes taken depended on the mentees' requirements and which classes they chose to pick. The absences and grades were recorded for each quarter. This provided us with a trend in their attendance and class grades throughout the school year. Due to the grades being letter grades and not numbers, I designed a number scale that would replace the letter scale. The numbers that corresponded to their letter grade were then recorded for each school quarter. For absences, I coded for the sum by quarter and total in the school year as well as the average by quarter and total for each mentee in the school year. For grades, I coded the average by quarter, as well as for each mentee. This information allowed us to determine trends and see if the ACE program is benefiting students.

In the next part, I created an infographic that depicts the trends of the mentee's absences and grades (see Figure A5). I turned the information that I collected from my excel sheet into a clear and concise display. On the left, I included two graphs, the first graph depicts the total absences by quarter for the mentees. The second graph highlights the average grades for each class for each quarter. Both graphs show clear trends in the mentee's overall performance during their school year. Regarding absences, there was a slight increase from quarter 1 to quarter 2, going from 83 to 103 total absences. From quarter 2 to quarter 3 though, there was a significant decrease, going to 55 in quarter 3 and 32 in quarter 4. This can show the ineffectiveness of online classrooms because schools started to fully open during the 3rd quarter. The grades graph pointed out different trends depending on the class. Throughout the school year, English and science class grades increased while history grades decreased, and math grades stayed the same. This can be from a more hands-on approach in science and math class because the teacher can provide a better understanding of the course work in class compared to online. History grades could have declined because of their strong start in quarter 1 and their poor performance in quarter 2, which did improve from quarter 3 to quarter 4. The information gained from the excel sheet and infographic provides an example of ACE's strong performance with the mentees.

My final foundational competency was to identify and build partnerships with JobCorps and other trade schools in the area, as well as provide programs and information offered. This competency presented the greatest challenge for me. I made numerous attempts at contacting JobCorps but was unsuccessful. Phone calls lead me to different individuals that were unsure of how to proceed with my request of having a representative come to Princeton YMCA or have an online event where they provide information and guidance for attending JobCorps and other trade schools. Due to this, I created a document that discusses different trades such as Bricklayer

and carpentry that are offered by the JobCorps Edison branch (see Appendix B). This can help offer the mentees condensed information about different trades that they may be interested in. Although not what I intended for, the information that is being provided to the mentees is what makes the difference. For the mentees not having the information, will contribute to their lack of guidance in understanding the different trades, which this hopes to alleviate.

My first concentration competency fulfillment was by analyzing health policy and outcomes by conducting a literature review that analyzes different trends in low-income communities, similar to Princeton, that can benefit ACE students in their careers (See Appendix C). For my research, I found 3 articles that pertain to different aspects of a trade school. The first article is about how a student's success in college is determined based on how their high school lays out their expectations for their senior year and their first year of college. Attributes including demographics and parental involvement may be significant, but not as much as the academic integration the students are eased into. Without the proper guidance, their motivation decreases, and it shows in their academics. This can relate to ACE because the mentors can help provide the extra foundation they need to have full academic integration that can benefit them in college or their post-sedentary education. The second article discusses how trade schools can be more attractive to low-income individuals because of the immediate job security. However, this also deters them while they are in these programs because they are confined to that program. Therefore, having proper guidance that offers them the correct information, allows them to pick the right job to be more successful in their careers. The third article highlights a school in Canada and how they are successful in their curriculum of providing their students with the proper information on trade schools. They offer students a chance to witness what the different trades perform so that after high school, the students can excel in their trade careers. This can be a

solution to the second article. High schools should adopt a program that introduces students to different trades. I now have the understanding that learning a trade will be in high demand in the future, which sheds light on the importance of both articles. Students who join a trade need to have an education about the trade before joining and having a program that provides this education is crucial. ACE, on top of the many activities they provide to their mentees, can help in their mentees' education in a trade so that if they choose to attend a trade school, they are more likely to be successful in it.

The next concentration competency fulfilled was designing an epidemiological study by administering a survey to investigate barriers in the Princeton community that inhibit the success of ACE students. I created a survey for the mentors and mentees to fill out. Similarly, to the first survey administered to them, "would you rather…?" and "The Lightbulb Company", the surveys were given out to their respective parties and notified to fill out through email, text, and basecamp. The mentors (see Figure A6) have questions directed towards the mentee's situation, regarding what they go through daily, their needs for the Princeton community to address, including the school system, and how each can provide any help to them. This information although isn't directly related to trading schools does help ACE better understand their mentees from the mentor's point of view. The total responses were high with 8 mentors providing important feedback for us to use (see Figure A7). The three highest responses for what your mentee is faced with, six mentors said that their mentee is faced with a lack of transportation and lack of academic achievement, as well as 5 mentors, stated family concerns. These issues relate to all things that disrupt the mentee from performing well in school. Lack of transportation poses an issue to get to and from class, as well as attending events. Many of the mentees would take an uber to class, an unnecessary amount of money to commute to class. Lack of academic

achievement highlights the main idea that these mentees are deterred from school because of their course work, which stems from a lack of care from their school. Family concerns play a role in many aspects of their life, whether it be their living conditions are too crowded and uncomfortable or there are issues with their relatives that they live with that distract them from performing well in school.

In the next question regarding what needs to be addressed in the Princeton community, the three highest responses relate to the school system: seven for academic guidance at school, and six for both student and parent involvement at school. Academic guidance at school can provide them with a better understanding of what they can do to fix their academics and attendance. This stems from their lack of understanding of colleges and alternative routes such as trade schools. Parent and student involvement prove that the school system does not support its members. Not offering clubs for people of all backgrounds and not including the parents in decisions about their child shows to be a negative aspect of the school system. The next question was open-ended about what would be helpful for the school system to know. There needs to be a better understanding of the mentee's family dynamic. The mentees come from different backgrounds and struggles. These struggles should not be held against them but recognized and encourage in solution-oriented decisions. The next topic is that they need academic support but enforce the repercussions of slacking off. The mentees should be provided with counselors that meet with them often and be in classes that are best suited for them. They should also know that if they do not meet a certain requirement, there should be consequences. Consequences such as taking the class again or extra hours of class time after school. The next question, directed towards the community, highlights the need for the community to offer better and more diverse youth employment opportunities. The mentees want to work so that they have money to spend on

food and things they want for themselves and their families. Some of the mentees give some of their salaries to their family to send back home or to use for rent. Offering more job opportunities for them with a better wage can help them live a more comfortable life.

The mentee survey (see Figure A8) asks questions that directly affect the mentee. Unfortunately, only two responses were recorded by the mentees but did offer important insight (see Figure A9). The first question asks what their school can do better for them, and the responses included better access to guidance counselors, more after-school activities, and better class placement. Guidance counselors are there to talk to students about any challenges they are facing, whether it be school or home-related. They can help better understand the student to place them in appropriate classes that can provide them with the help they need and college placement. Having after-school activities will promote a closer community, expand the students' interests, and keep the students busy in a positive way. Many of the mentees want to be involved and form a positive change in the community and having available after-school activities for them can provide them with those opportunities. Class placement is important because mentees are put in classes that are not suited for them. They are being passed along to meet a quota while they are not fully learning the material given to them. Putting them in their appropriate class will help them stay motivated to learn the material they are required to learn. The second question asked what your community can do that would benefit you and the responses were: community service activity and physician access. Not having the proper access to a physician could affect the mentee's health because of a decreased chance of catching something that can affect them long or short term. Due to this, they may miss deadlines for paperwork if they need to get a medical form filled out, or not feel well enough to attend school because of the delay. Having community service activities will promote better community engagement and a well-rounded

community that the mentees and their families can be a part of. The final question asked what they have been faced with, and the responses were: Racism from an adult figure, racism from a peer, a challenging class you are and are not interested in, and both respondents said lack of job opportunities. Racism from an adult figure as well as a peer is disheartening and shameful. Being a young person hearing or seeing racial actions being done can deter the mentee. It is a challenging situation with the negative drawbacks they face. Dealing with racism is a horrific act and should be looked into by the school system and community. When being in a class they are interested in or not, students should be engaged in the classroom, ideally with all classes. Of course, students may not enjoy a specific class, but that may be because of the teacher not communicating to the best of their ability. Students need to want to learn subjects in school and there should be better engagements to accomplish this. As previously stated, many of the mentees help support their families. Without a job that provides them with a stable income, their families will struggle.

My last goal and objective fulfill my cross-cutting competency of performing effectively in interprofessional teams by preparing a slideshow that breaks down the mentors' and mentees' responses from the survey administered in my second concentration competency and first foundational competency during a mentor meeting (see Figure A10). The formatting goes by each survey and marks the responses that received the most answers. The responses that received the most answers discussed what each response means and how it can be addressed in the community. This allowed me to communicate my thoughts and what I saw were the issues as well as what they see as the issues. An in-depth discussion on the needs of their mentees took place following my presentation. The first idea is to have more surveys throughout the year. They felt that getting consistent feedback from the mentees, as well as themselves will not only

help the mentees but how we can better operate ACE and were to have more of our energy. The surveys will also point out any new conditions the mentees are facing and will allow us to look at that issue as soon as possible to fix it. Their other concern was how these issues can be resolved in the community. They felt that although finding out what the issues are is necessary, actually fixing these issues is important. The mentors wanted to write a letter to the high school explaining who they are and what they want to see change for their mentees. Although my time with ACE ended before I could see the letter go through, it gave me hope that the mentees are in caring hands that take action to provide improved education and lifestyle.

Policy

Overall, my internship experience contributed to an understanding of chronic absenteeism at the high school level and what alternatives can be offered to these students to still ensure their post-graduation success by adding to already established policies working to undo the harmful effects of this public health issue. The policies explained in this section directly relate to protecting students and establishing a good attendance record for all enrolled.

A major policy adapted to gauge student absenteeism currently in effect in the United States is Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Originally geared towards monitoring the quality of schools by the state via different indicators chosen by each state, schools are now using the policy to detect the issue of chronic absenteeism in the building. States are more apt to use chronic absenteeism as an indicator as it is "one of the few metrics available now to all states and that meets or exceeds the rigorous ESSA selection criteria for indicators" (Attendance Works, 2016). However, this indicator of chronic absenteeism should be looked at by other factors such as "rates of suspension, expulsion, student mobility and school climate measures (Attendance

Works, 2016). During my internship experience, it was clear the mentees' chronic absenteeism was linked to other factors related to the Princeton community inside and out of the school building. Factors like socioeconomic status and race did contribute to the rate at which the mentees were absent from school, but other factors like a lack of guidance from counselors, teachers, and administrators alike also affected the students' attendance record. There was a clear lack of intervention from those who were supposed to be supporting the mentees throughout their academic and social journey at Princeton High School. New Jersey's ESSA indicator happens to be chronic absenteeism; thus, the high school should be held accountable for protecting and accommodating their vulnerable student population to improve the quality of their school and student success rate.

Advocating for states' involvement in the ESSA policy and chronic absenteeism solutions, Attendance Works, a national and statewide program, is a proponent of student success and equity. The program advocates for attendance awareness through three major objectives: these include "Build[ing] public awareness and political will…Foster[ing] state campaigns and partnerships…[and] encourage[ing] local practice" (Attendance Works, 2018). To fulfill the first objective, Attendance Works connects to the public on a national level through the consistent use of the media to ensure national organizations are aware of and understand the major gap in learning and achievement caused by chronic absenteeism. Another major point they communicate to the public is the "difference between chronic absence and truancy" which can often be misconstrued. To carry out the second objective, the program explores various coalitions to track the attendance of individual students within the country to report on the effectiveness and quality of school districts by investigating how the schools intervene and assist these students once they are identified as chronically absent. To accomplish the third objective,

Attendance Works offers technical assistance and various technological platforms to assist

schools and their communities to improve the data and statistics measured about attendance and

student engagement. This technological backing allows for peer learning across the school

community as well. This program is closely related to my internship experience as the major

objectives of both align in many ways. Both work to identify chronically absent students and

attempt to help raise the attendance records of these students by engaging them in the school

community. Like Attendance Works, the ACE program acquires accurate data about student

attendance, engagement, and achievement through technological platforms. During my

internship experience, the coordinators and managers at the ACE program attempted to

communicate the importance of this issue and how to actively work to intervene with Princeton

High School's administration and guidance department. Although we were unable to

communicate this information on a statewide scale, members of the Princeton community were

made aware through the YMCA and word of mouth via the mentors who were active members of

the community and program alike.

A policy connected to enrollment in trade/vocational schools was the result of the Adams

v. Califano case. In 1977, the plaintiff sued the department of health, education, and welfare

(HEW) for failing to originate a plan which would desegregate access to universities and

colleges that typically only accept white students. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff and

concluded the acceptance/enrollment of schools in North Carolina, along with five other states,

should have to align with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IV to ensure black and brown

students were given an equal opportunity to attend and learn within these school communities

(Office of Civil Rights, 2020). The same standard was extended to trade and vocational

education; all schools were required to equally accept black and white students looking to be

certified, trade professionals. This policy directly relates to the ACE Program as all of the

mentees' are first-generation students of color. Without policies like this in place, trade schools

may have denied our mentees based on race, social class, and lack of connection to the trade

profession. This ruling ensures the viability of trade school as a post-primary school option

considering mentees will have an equal opportunity to be accepted into these programs. Since the

mentees have been neglected by the Princeton High School education and guidance department,

the ACE Program has an obligation to these students to provide them with an option void of

discrimination and nepotism to secure a successful career and future financial stability.

Developmental Goals: Healthy People 2030

Similarly, chronic absenteeism, a major public health concern, can be linked to national

agendas of two developmental goals highlighted based on the Healthy People 2030 goals. Within

the initiative's determinants of health, Healthy People 2030 featured "Reduce the proportion of

adolescents and young adults who aren't in school or working- AH-09" and "Increase the

employment in working-age people- SDOH-02" as the economic stability objectives of the next

eight years. The first objective deals with minimizing the amount of chronically absent students

in school districts across our country; chronically absent students tend to suffer in multiple ways

which affect the workforce and the economy (Office of Disease Prevention and Health

Promotion, n.d.). As a result of missing 10% or more of the school days in a given year, students

often do not receive credit for the courses they are enrolled in. If they are chronically absent for

all four years of high school, they will not meet the credit requirement to graduate. Without this

diploma, students will not be accepted into any college or university. In today's educational

climate, a degree from a college or university is key to securing a well-paying, stable job.

Therefore, to reduce the proportion of students who are not attending school or working, our

school districts and communities need to fund programs like ACE to begin identifying chronically absent students to target and recover their attendance issues as well as assist them with their academic and social goals. The second objective closely relates to the first and specifically requires a solution to the lack of working-age people in our country. A major cause of lack of employment is a lack of certification or qualification. Most occupations in our country require a 4-year degree from a recognized college or university which, as previously discussed, is unattainable for some students. Without this degree, graduates are unable to join and participate effectively in the workforce. Thus, to move towards the success of this objective, our society needs to offer and normalize an alternate route for primary school graduates. Trade and vocational schools do not require a high school or college degree to enroll. With this obstacle removed from the enrollment process, chronically absent students can apply and are accepted into trade and vocational schools. To increase the employment among working-age people, we must increase the employment opportunity- not by adding to the prerequisites for the job market but by making occupation opportunities more accessible to our country's population.

Policy Recommendations

As far as policy recommendations, chronic absenteeism can be remedied by enforcing stricter, more widely funded programs like ACE in low socio-economic status communities and school districts. A major reason why students do not show up for up to 10% or more of the school year has to deal with the lack of support they receive from their school and outside community. If there was an outlet, like ACE, where they could receive this support and aid, attending school would be an easier and more frequent occurrence. To address the scope of the issue, government entities should be marketing these programs to schools across the country, specifically those in areas where chronic absenteeism is rampant as a result of outside factors

like students acting as childcare and translators for their families or students who need to provide for their families monetarily. Rather than simply fund and provide grants to enact these programs, the government needs to be advertising and pushing for an influx in these programs. After-school programs like sports, drama, art, etc. do not address the chronic absenteeism program. Schools need to invest in solving this issue with programs like ACE to target students who are falling behind as a result of their absences. To achieve a solution, boards of education across the country should be providing their schools with the information associated with these programs and track the progress and overall need once they are implemented. In addition, boards of education should also be educating and providing their schools with accurate information about trade schools and how to apply and enroll in them. An emphasis should be put on this track in addition to the typical 4-year college track to ensure all students have a tertiary education option suitable for their academic level and knowledge base. A sustainable health approach would be to have YMCAs and other major family/community organizations partnering with schools in their community to kickstart these programs to place responsibility on both the school community as well as the community the students live in.

Recommendations

Interning with the ACE program has provided me with a better understanding of the situation these students are facing. Chronic absenteeism does not stem from only one factor but a multitude of factors that all impact students' lives differently. Working with the ACE program allowed me to see these issues first-hand and provided me with the information to determine what practices I believe will be beneficial to the students' long-term career options. Having trade schools as a viable option for the students to enroll in instead of the typical college route can offer the mentees a career path that, although previously cast aside, can commit to and be

successful in. Not all high school experiences equip students with the ability to go to college; thus, having trade school as an option still allows chronically absent mentees to participate in tertiary education more feasibly.

College students who volunteer with the ACE program should focus on what the students will want to achieve after high school. College students can make connections with different trade schools in the area and regularly meet with them to discuss this option for the mentees. Including representatives from trade schools as stakeholders in the program will improve connections with ACE and the schools involved. Incorporating this into the internship experience will provide the mentees with an even better understanding of trade schools and if they feel it is the right path for them. The students volunteering at the ACE program should understand the mentees' backgrounds and their family situations. All the mentees have different living situations, family dynamics, and cultures that influence their decisions in their daily life. Knowing how these differences affect their decisions can prove to be beneficial to the students interning. Sitting down with each of the mentees and talking about their experiences and family will help the ACE program and interns prepare to assist with their attendance and academic record. If things get tough, look to the ACE program director and the mentors. They are close to each mentee and have seen firsthand what the mentee's experiences are. Having their support is important and necessary to understand who each mentee is.

For the ACE program to improve the mentee's understanding and ability to enroll in trade school, I believe that the ACE program should look into introducing the mentees to trade professionals. The professional can discuss, why they chose the trade they are in, how they discovered the trade school they applied to, and more about their experiences working in a trade. This is a similar format to the Paths to Success the ACE program has, but instead of different

career paths, different trade professionals from carpenters to plumbers speak about their careers and trade. On top of this, the YMCA and the ACE program can work together to set up a career fair that focuses on different trade professions and display what they do throughout the day. They can provide the mentees with demonstrations on what the different tools are made for and how to use them. This can offer the students a visual representation of the trade and the importance of each trade's work.

Finally, TCNJ and the ACE program can partner to help support the effort of finding young and intelligent mentors. TCNJ houses a diverse population of students who are focusing on different careers and are involved in different school programs. The mentees in the ACE program would benefit from these students because of the issues stemming from their current mentors. The current mentors are seen as grandparent figures that they use for transportation and food. The connection between them is not strong because of the gap in age and the lack of understanding of their background. The TCNJ public health students, and other students at the school, can remedy this because of their closeness in age and understanding of the social determinants that plague their everyday lives. The TCNJ students would be seen as older siblings, someone close to them but an authoritarian figure. The mentees would benefit from this by building better connections that can offer them proper guidance that focuses on what they want to accomplish after high school.

To help integrate TCNJ students into their internship program, ACE program coordinators and mentors along with coordinators at the YMCA should visit the campus to recruit students, detailing the purpose and objective of the program. ACE volunteers should speak with TCNJ students regarding the responsibilities and expectations of mentors and internship students. ACE should also implement prerequisites when recruiting mentors or

program coordinators like myself. Students should have some experience working with high schoolers whether it be through another mentorship program or another internship experience. By including this prerequisite, those who intern at ACE will have more experience and expertise when it comes to working with students. The ACE program could help launch internship students into their next steps by providing them with connections to the NJ Bonner Foundation or other grant foundations to continue the work being done at the YMCA.

The main course that contributed to my internship experience and aided in my capstone project's success was 540 Intermediate Epidemiology. Epidemiology is the study of populations and understanding how these populations thrive or struggle. Working on different populations in class allowed me to better understand how to properly aid a population's needs and how to address them. The ACE program incorporates different populations that present different issues. Chronically absent students have certain needs, but also Haitian students and Mexican students have different needs as well. Looking into how each population to see how they are culturally different allowed me to determine what the best steps are to handling those chronically absent students. The main success in how I handled this situation with the help of my course, was to also send the information to the mentee's families and to include the information in their respective languages like Haitian Creole and Spanish. The majority of the mentee's parents recently emigrated from Haiti, Mexico, or Puerto Rico; having them be able to feel included in their child's academics and the program is a benefit to the mentees and the program.

Overall, I think the TCNJ Public Health program can better prepare its graduate and undergraduate students by offering a wider variety of classes focusing on a broader spectrum of public health related issues. Oftentimes, the classes I was enrolled in focused primarily on the medicinal health of the world's or our country's population. Unfortunately, I was not exposed to

issues like food insecurity or chronic absenteeism like I was during my internship experience. I think it would be beneficial to include classes that focus on other aspects of the public's well-being in addition to their medical health. Offering a class that highlights local organizations and their work within the Ewing/Trenton community would allow TCNJ students to immerse themselves in their community's public health. This would allow students to see themselves working within communities to better the health of the public in a non-medical sense. I also think the Public Health Program should offer and require a "grant-writing" seminar where students are taught and practice the process of writing grant proposals like the ones non-profits and other organizations require to successfully acquire funds to better the health of the public. Although the program is very writing intensive, I think a class dedicated to the production and practice of grant writing would be more beneficial than taking multiple research-writing-based courses. By honing both of these writing styles in their classes, TCNJ Public Health students could graduate from the program as more well-rounded writers in the field. I believe classes such as Statistics and Epidemiology should be researched focused while Health Systems, Health Promotion, and Communication classes should emphasize grant-writing. Also, I think TCNJ could help students during their internship experience by having weekly meetings with all students interning either face-to-face or via an online platform. This will allow students to talk through and solve any issues they are having within the internship space with a professor who has worked within and faced challenges within the public health field. Without these check-ins and advice sessions, students may feel unsupported during their internship experience.

In the next five years, I see the public health of low-socioeconomic communities declining as a result of a lack of guidance for career opportunities after high school. I feel that our country places such heavy emphasis on college and typical career paths that low socio-

economic students and families will assume the only jobs available to them are in customer service or minimum wage jobs. I think this will further divide the class separation in this country and will start to affect the overall health of the low socio-economic class. The lack of monetary success will lead to a lack of resources like food and access to health care. To ensure a bright future instead, I believe trade schools need to be advertised as a viable option for chronically absent and low socio-economic students to ensure they have a career path that will lead to longevity and benefits for them and their families alike.

Although programs like ACE are still trying to push for trade schools to be seen as a respected post-graduation option, I do believe we are working towards this as communities and schools alike are committing to ensuring the success of their students. I do believe there is an outpouring of support from the Bonner Foundation, the TCNJ community, and the Princeton community alike when it comes to supporting those who are chronically absent but want to provide for themselves and their families. I do think by advertising the success of programs like ACE will enlighten school boards across the country to implement these programs and begin to rehabilitate their chronically absent, low socioeconomic students as well as their mindset about trade schools and trade professions.

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Appendix

Figure A1

Section 1 of 2

Would you rather...?

Pick which one you would rather do.

What's your initial? (This will only be used to help with organization)

Short answer text

Question 1

○ Play your favorite sport outside?

○ Play your favorite video game inside?

Question 2

○ Maintain your lawn?

○ Install a computer?

Question 3

○ Work on a project alone?

○ Work on a project in a group?

Question 4

○ Install a ceiling fan in your neighbors house?

○ Fix your neighbors kitchen sink?

Question 5

○ Deliver a bunch of boxes of supplies from your house to your Aunts?

○ Cook your family breakfast, lunch and dinner?

Question 6

○ Paint your neighbors houses?

○ Plant your neighbors shrubs?

Question 7

○ Design and install a walk way for your friends house?

○ Connect your friends lights in their house?

Question 8

○ Provide running water for your uncles house?

○ Fix the holes in the wall in your families house?

Question 9

○ Fix the brakes in your parents car?

○ Install speakers in your backyard?

Question 10

○ Cook and serve food at your local nursing home?

○ Install an air conditioning unit at your local nursing home?

What do you see yourself doing? What are your goals?

Long answer text

Figure A2

Figure A3

Figure A4

Figure A5

Figure A6

Mentor Survey

Make an X or a mark with what applies to you. If you are uncomfortable marking a choice that applies to you, that's okay. Your name will not be used at all, only the information to better understand your situation.

What's your initial? (This will only be used to help with organization)

Short answer text

Of the following, what is your ACE mentee faced with? *

☐ Lack of academic achievement

☐ Family concerns

☐ Food insecurity

☐ Lack of transportation

☐ Mental Health

☐ Physical Health

☐ Access to online services

☐ Other…

What needs to be addressed within the Princeton community? *

☐ Student involvement at school

☐ Parent involvement at school

☐ Academic guidance at school

☐ Transportation services (more locations, more available methods of transportation)

☐ Culturally appropriate food services

☐ Access to physicians

☐ Community service events

☐ Other…

What would be helpful for the school to know to better understand your mentee needs? *

Long answer text

How can the Princeton community directly benefit your mentee? *

Long answer text

Figure A7

Of the following, what is your ACE mentee faced with?
8 responses

- Lack of academic achievement — 6 (75%)
- Family concerns — 5 (62.5%)
- Food insecurity — 3 (37.5%)
- Lack of transportation — 6 (75%)
- Mental Health — 2 (25%)
- Physical Health — 2 (25%)
- Access to online services — 2 (25%)
- lack of motivation for school — 1 (12.5%)

(x-axis: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

Copy

What needs to be addressed within the Princeton community?
8 responses

- Student involvement at school — 6 (75%)
- Parent involvement at school — 6 (75%)
- Academic guidance at school — 7 (87.5%)
- Transportation services (more l... — 4 (50%)
- Culturally appropriate food serv... — 1 (12.5%)
- Access to physicians — 2 (25%)
- Community service events — 3 (37.5%)
- I'm not sure whether transporta... — 1 (12.5%)

(x-axis: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8)

Copy

What would be helpful for the school to know to better understand your mentee needs?
8 responses

Richard does well when he's focused, but he can be forgetful and disorganized which affects his academic performance. His grades have improved over the last two years, but I'm concerned that he may have missed key material during "virtual school." He likes math but didn't do well in the middle school STEM class - which may have reflected his difficulty mastery assignments taught virtually. He's recognized that school is important - and I believe that he is bright and thoughtful - and I hope he can build on that and develop time management and organizational skills and a way of tracking his assignments and academic and non-academic commitments.

Try to make clear the consequences and possibility of failing high school. It seems that all students graduate so why should he work? Try to find out what would motivate him to study and attend class.

Keep after him and not allow him to slack off. Show that the system cares that he succeeds.

My mentees need extra support with academics. Also school need to involve parents.

Maybe monthly reports written by mentors for the school to have access to. I would like the school to know how challenging my mentees family dynamics have made his home life and consequently his ability to perform at school. When a student is in survival mode it is terriblt difficult to thrive.

How can the Princeton community directly benefit your mentee?
8 responses

In a large school, I know individual attention is at a premium, but I think helping Richard developing skills now, would have a big pay-off later.

offer paid summer internships in different fields

Not assume that all Princeton HS students have parents at home to take them places.

By being a better student, they
Can be better citizens in the future

Opportunities for involvement, employment, and scholarship opportunities.

Housing. Although the family is in supportive housing now, they have been told that to remain with a 2 bedroom apartment once the 2 year period is up, the Mom would have to earn over $44,000/year. That is not going to happen and that is an unrealistic goal for them. She is hard working; the mentee also works. This needs to be addressed. There is also not a lot of community stuff a kid can be involved in who does not have money.
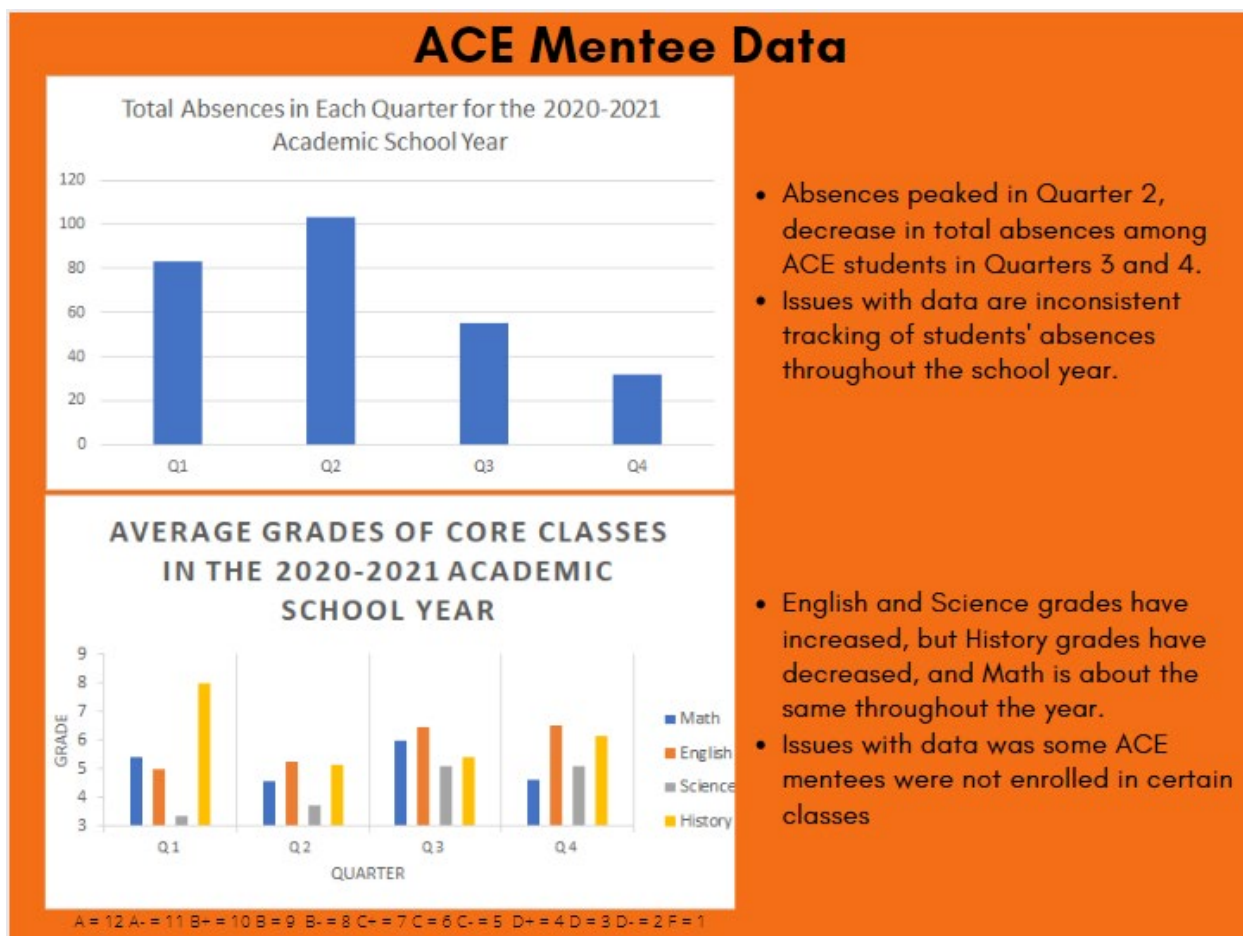
Figure A8

Mentee Survey

Make an X or a mark with what applies to you. If you are uncomfortable marking a choice that applies to you, that's okay. Your name will not be used at all, only the information to better understand your situation.

What's your initial? (This will only be used to help with organization)

Short answer text

What could your school do better that would benefit you? *

☐ Better access to teachers

☐ Better access to guidance counselors

☐ After school activities (sports related)

☐ After school activities (ex: academic clubs)

☐ Breakfast and lunches

☐ Transportation services

☐ Online assistance

☐ Better placement in classes

☐ Other...

What could your community do better that would benefit you? *

☐ Better transportation

☐ Culturally appropriate foods

☐ Physician access

☐ Community service activites

☐ Other...

Have you been faced with...... *

☐ Racism from an adult figure?

☐ Racism from a peer?

☐ A challenging class you are not interested in?

☐ A challenging class you are interested in?

☐ No food for more than a day?

☐ Inability to fall asleep for 2 or more times a week?

☐ Overcrowded living conditions

☐ Lack of job opportunities

☐ Unable to work due to family reasons

☐ Other...

What do you need from your community and school system to thrive?

Long answer text

Figure A9

2 responses

Accepting responses

Summary   Question   Individual

What could your school do better that would benefit you?   Copy
2 responses

- Better access to teachers — 0 (0%)
- Better access to guidance coun... — 1 (50%)
- After school activities (sports re... — 1 (50%)
- After school activities (ex: acad... — 0 (0%)
- Breakfast and lunches — 0 (0%)
- Transportation services — 0 (0%)
- Online assistance — 0 (0%)
- Better placement in classes — 1 (50%)

(scale 0.0 to 1.0)

What could your community do better that would benefit you?   Copy
2 responses

- Better transportation — 0 (0%)
- Culturally appropriate foods — 0 (0%)
- Physician access — 1 (50%)
- Community service activites — 1 (50%)

(scale 0.0 to 1.0)

Have you been faced with.....   Copy
2 responses

- Racism from an adult figure? — 1 (50%)
- Racism from a peer? — 1 (50%)
- A challenging class you are not... — 1 (50%)
- A challenging class you are int... — 1 (50%)
- No food for more than a day? — 0 (0%)
- Inability to fall asleep for 2 or m... — 0 (0%)
- Overcrowded living conditions — 0 (0%)
- Lack of job opportunities — 2 (100%)
- Unable to work due to family re... — 0 (0%)

(scale 0 to 2)

What do you need from your community and school system to thrive?
0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

Figure A10

Survey Findings

ACE at the Princeton YMCA

Would You Rather...?

The goal is to determine what the mentees would rather do in relation to different trades. Comparing different options one and one and in a company setting can allow us to understand where they can fit in and excel in.

Responses that received 100%

- **Install a computer** rather than maintain their lawn
  - Electrician, technical support, computer technician
- **Work on a group project** rather than work on a project alone
  - Most careers require a team to complete a task
- **Deliver boxes of supplies** rather than cook breakfast lunch and dinner
  - Truck driver, material handling, Heavy construction equipment operator

Responses that received 75%

- **Install a ceiling fan** rather than fix neighbors kitchen sink
  - Similar to installing a computer, electrician would be a good fit
  - Plumbing
- **Fixing car brakes** rather than install speakers
  - Mechanic and collision repair
  - Electrician
- **Cooking food for others** rather than install an air conditioning unit
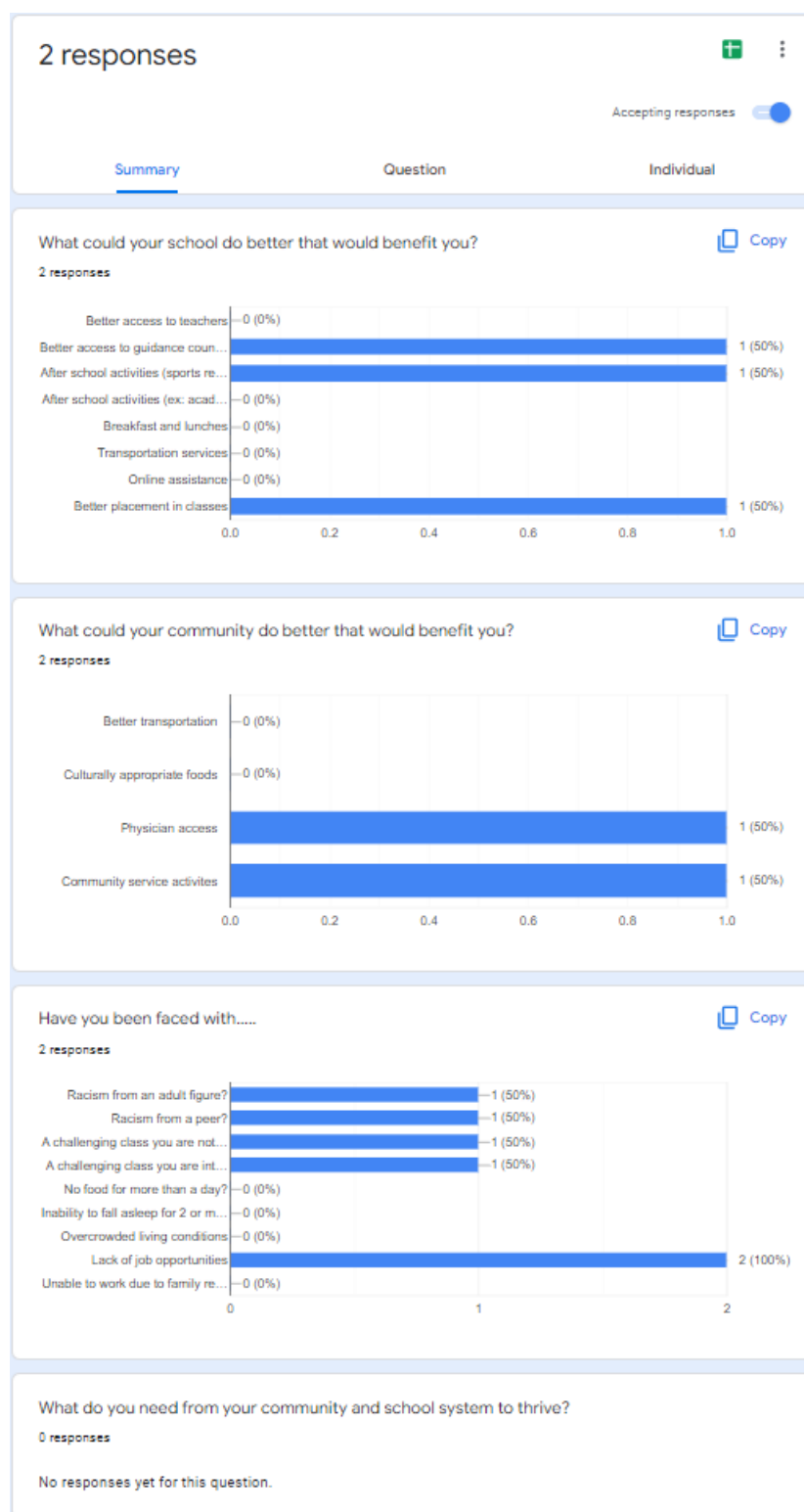 - Culinary
  - Heating ventilation and air conditioning HVAC

50/50 Responses

- Play your favorite sport outside
  - Being physically active outside
- Plant your neighbors shrubs
  - Landscaping
- Design and install a walkway
  - Bricklaying, tile laying, landscaping
- Fix holes in the wall
  - plastering , carpentry

- Play your favorite video game
  - Being stationary inside
- Paint your neighbors house
  - Painter
- Connect your friends lights in their house
  - Electrician
- Provide running water
  - plumbing

The Lightbulb Company

The rankings:

1. Install the computer systems and maintain the service connection for the company to continue their work (5.25)
2. Install and maintain the water system (sinks, toilets, etc) work correctly throughout the building (6)
3. Provide unique and nutritious foods to the employees (6)
4. Fix any issues that revolve around the trucks for transportation (brakes, carburetor, engine, oil, etc) (6.25)
5. Build the walls and floors of the building (6.25)
6. Install and maintain the heating, ventilation and air conditioning of the building (6.5)
7. Install and maintain the electric throughout the building so that there the facilities work correctly (6.75)
8. Coordinate the deliveries of parts and products going in and out of the building (7)
9. Design and maintain the outdoor scenery of the building (plants and outdoor scenery) (8)
10. Survey the camera system to make sure there are no trespassers (8.5)

Mentee Survey

Used to better understand the Princeton community from the perspective of the mentee.

What could your school do better that would benefit you?

- **Better access to Guidance Counselors**
  - Guidance counselors are there to talk to students about any challenges they are facing, whether it be school or home related. They can help better understand the student to place them in appropriate classes that can provide them with the help they need and college placement.
- **After School Activities**
  - Having after school activities will promote a closer community, expand the students interests, and keep the students busy in a positive way
- **Better Placement in Classes**
  - Mentees are put in classes that are not suited for them. They are being passed along to meet a quota while they are not fully learning the material given to them.

What can your community do better for you?

- **Physician Access**
  - This could affect the mentees health because of a decreased chance of catching something that can affect them long or short term. May miss deadlines for paper work if they need to get a medical form filled out.
- **Community Service Activities**
  - Having community service activities will promote better community engagement and well rounded community

Have you been faced with...

- **Racism from an Adult figure**
- **Racism from a peer**
  - Being a young person hearing or seeing racial actions being done can deter the mentee. It is a challenging situation with the negative drawbacks they face. Dealing with racism is a horrific act and should be looked into.
- **A challenging class you are not interested in**
- **A challenging class you are interested in**
  - Students should be engaged in the classroom, ideally with all classes. Of course students may not enjoy a specific class, but that may be because of the teacher not communicating to the best of their ability. It's important for students to want to learn subjects in school and there should be better engagements to accomplish this.
- **Lack of job opportunities**
  - Many of the mentees help support their families. Without a job that provides them with a stable income, their families will struggle.

Mentor Survey

Our goal is to identify any issues or challenges that are shown through the mentor perspective

What is your ACE mentee faced with?

1. **Lack of transportation**
   a. Better access to school so they do not miss class; transportation to and from different services (food, entertainment, etc.)
2. **Lack academic achievement**
   a. Students are deterred if they are not doing well or do not understand the subject. Teachers and school professionals must better equip students to help them succeed.
3. **Family concerns**
   a. The mentees come from different backgrounds and different family structures. Many are low income and can only focus on making money to make ends meet. The school should understand and provide the mentees with assistance
4. **Food insecurity**
   a. Many mentees struggle to have enough food for themselves. Some come from large families and do not have enough money to support the entire family. Adequate and nutritious foods need to be provided to the mentees and their families.

What needs to be addressed within the Princeton Community?

1. **Academic guidance at school**
   a. Assistance in class placement and after high school placement, whether it be college or trade school.
2. **Student involvement at school**
   a. Participate in clubs and other extracurricular activities that are suited for all kinds of students.
3. **Parent involvement at school**
   a. Better communication with parents to notify them about any news or events that relate to their children or the school.
4. **Community service events**
   a. More chances for the mentees to be involved in their community by volunteering to help strengthen their community.

What would be helpful for the school to know to better understand your mentees needs?

- **Better understand the family dynamic**
  - The mentees come from different backgrounds and struggles. These struggles should not be held against them, but recognized and encourage solution oriented decisions.
- **Needs academic support**
  - Be provided with counselors that meet with them often and be in classes that are best suited for them.
- **Know that if the mentee slacks off there will be consequences**
  - The mentees should know that if they do not meet a certain requirement, there should be consequences. Consequences such as taking the class again or extra hours of class time.

Table A1

Absences 2020-2021				
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
11	18	11	10	50
9	16	14	7	46
13	8	9	2	32
1	7	4	3	15
24	21	8	4	57
11	13	4	0	28
3	4	5	1	13
7	9	0	0	16
4	7	0	5	16
83	103	55	32	273
9.222222222	11.44444444	6.111111111	3.555555556	30.33333333

Math Grades 2020-2021				
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
P	P	P	P	#DIV/0!
8	6	9	2	6.25
12	7	6	6	7.75
7	8	8	6	7.25
3	1	6	1	2.75
-	-	1	1	1
3	6	9	6	6
2	1	5	6	3.5
3	3	4	9	4.75
5.428571429	4.571428571	6	4.625	5.15625

English Grades 2020-2021				
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
10	10	12	12	11
8	7	6	2	5.75
3	4	9	9	6.25
8	8	8	8	8
1	1	1	1	1
4	5	8	5	5.5
-	3	6	8	5.666666667
1	1	1	7	2.5
5	8	7	-	6.666666667
5	5.222222222	6.444444444	6.5	5.791666667

Science Grades 2020-2021				
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
P	P	6	7	6.5
5	5	10	4	6
-	-	2	8	5
6	7	9	12	8.5
1	1	3	1	1.5
1	1	1	1	1
-	2	5	6	4.333333333
1	1	1	3	1.5
6	9	9	4	7
3.333333333	3.714285714	5.111111111	5.111111111	4.317460317

History Grades 2020-2021				
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
-	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
8	5	5	8	6.5
-	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
10	9	11	12	10.5
5	1	1	2	2.25
6	2	5	2	3.75
8	9	7	8	8
11	4	2	4	5.25
8	6	7	7	7
8	5.142857143	5.428571429	6.142857143	6.178571429

<p style="text-align:center">Appendix B</p>

JobCorps Careers - Edison Location

- **Maintenance and Light Repair**
  - Test and maintain vehicles and their parts such as engines, brakes, and steering. They will need to be able to identify an issue and be able to fix that issue.
  - Some skills that will be needed are troubleshooting and repairing electrical components, reading blueprints and schematics, and understanding refrigeration methods.
  - Will be able to work in the automotive industry and can work in repair shops and perform routine maintenance.

- **Bricklayer**
  - Being able to properly lay bricks effectively and safely; will be certified by the International Masonry Institute.
  - They will be learning how to lay and bind building material to repair walls efficiently and be able to use different tools to properly seal and maintain construction
  - They can work with brick masons in private or public businesses.
  - Physically demanding and will be outside for the majority of the time

- **Building Construction Technology**
  - Learn different skills that are needed at all construction sites; will be certified by Home Builders Institute.
  - Learn carpentry and masonry skills to maintain and keep the building safe; use different tools to finish and seal building surfaces, and develop skills in landscaping
  - They can work for commercial, schools, and residential buildings

- **Carpentry**
  - This program is offered by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; this is a very hands-on program regarding curriculum and requirements.
  - Learn a multitude of different skills such as constructing, installing, and repairing drywall and other materials; measuring materials; properly using necessary tools; and following instructions and blueprints.
  - They can work in the private and public sectors of many different businesses.

- **Electrical**
  - This program is certified by Home Builders Institute; this is a very hands-on program regarding curriculum and requirements.
  - Installing, maintaining, and repairing electrical wiring; performing indoor and outdoor electrical wiring; connecting different components to have safe wirings such as circuit breakers and transformers.
  - They become licensed electricians and are self-employed.

- **Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)**
    - They are in charge of keeping homes and buildings cool in the summer and warm in the winter using a wide variety of tools.
    - They will learn how to install and repair heating and air conditioning units; testing methods; tools and equipment needed; connect gas, electric heating, cooling systems, and heat pumps
    - Work with construction contractors or are self-employed

- **Culinary Arts**
    - The goal is to make the food taste great and look delicious
    - They will learn the tools and equipment; measurements; food preparation; storing of food to ensure freshness and safety.
    - They work in many different fields such as the service industry like restaurants and catering halls, or institutions such as schools or hospitals. They work entire days and are always on their feet.

- **Computer Technician**
    - They install, maintain, and repair the computer and networks. They install security measures and offer technical support.
    - Work with other devices such as printers and scanners; replace parts; identify how software affects computer networks
    - They work with mid to large-size companies or computer repair contractors. Would work most hours of the day.

Appendix C

1. "Baccalaureate Expectations of Community College Students: Socio-Demographic, Motivational, and Contextual Influences" By Xueli Wang

Citation:
Xueli Wang. (2013). Baccalaureate Expectations of Community College Students: Socio-Demographic, Motivational, and Contextual Influences. Teachers College Record, 115(4), 1–39.

Main Point: The most relevant and determinant factors of student success at the community college level are the expectations laid out for them during their senior year of high school and first year of college. Although our society may try to convince students their demographics, parental involvement, or student motivation can greatly impact their success in post-secondary education, "academic integration" or the ease in which students adapt to the expectations their school sets for them, is the key component of baccalaureate success. Those other factors merely affect students' initial motivation in post-secondary education.

Why is this important to my research?
-ACE students lack initial motivation because they may believe that their socioeconomic status, demographic/race, lack of parental support, and lack of initial motivation lock them out of the world of higher education.
-But, since they were enrolled in Princeton High School, which sets a high level of expectation for students, they were accustomed to recognizing and understanding what teachers wanted and needed from them as students, regardless of if they completed the work.
-This understanding of expectation partnered with the motivation and confidence given to them by the mentors would be what students needed to excel in community college.

2. "'Why Wait Years to Become Something?' Low-income African American Youth and the Costly Career Search in For-profit Trade Schools" By Megan M. Holland and Stefanie DeLuca

Citation:
Holland, M. M., & DeLuca, S. (2016). "Why Wait Years to Become Something?" Low-income African American Youth and the Costly Career Search in For-profit Trade Schools. Sociology of Education, 89(4), 261–278. https://ezproxy.tcnj.edu:2083/10.1177/0038040716666607

Main Point: This article addresses the initial draw of trade school for underprivileged African American students which is the way it allows them to begin working and acquire the knowledge of a particular area quicker than most other post-secondary options. The issue, though, is students are required to choose and stick to an area of trade without exploring and taking time to learn about and work in every trade available to them by the school. When students are enrolled in a four-year or even two-year college or university, they are allowed to change their area of

study or major repeatedly regardless of what major they chose when they applied. When enrolling in a trade school, these students must remain in the original program; this often causes students who were unaware of the requirements or details of the trade they picked to lose interest in both their course work and their future in post-secondary education.

Why is this important to my research?
-As a result of ACE students lacking direction after high school, we, at the YMCA, may believe trade school is the best option for students who need to support their families and change the trajectory of their lives via socioeconomic status and education level.
-However, in the same way, these students lack direction on which post-secondary education option is best and most appropriate for them, they may also lack direction regarding which trade to choose.
-This is why it is imperative that as a part of my capstone research, the ACE program informs students about which trades would be available to them, what the trades entail, and what would be the expectation in each trade field. This is also the main reason for surveying the ACE students about their likes and dislikes regarding post-secondary work. If we can help the ACE students narrow down which trade would be the most compatible with their interests, we can ensure they will remain in that trade during their time at school and commit to obtaining their licenses and certifications.

Extra Articles:

Brown, C., & Talbot, C. (2020). TAP into Trades, Education Canada, 60(2), 14-17.
^This one talks about a program available to students from 8-12th grade (all kids including those who would be in an ACE-type program because it's free). The kids go after school and are introduced to each of the different trades they could go into. They work hands-on with the equipment and learn the ins and outs of the trade. Using this as a model for a future goal of ACE, creating a program like this within ACE to get kids to go to trade schools.

https://www.bls.gov/oes/2017/may/611500_2.htm
^This is the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Website, you can use this because it's the government's site. There's a ton of data on here about trades you can be enrolled in and how many have been enrolled. They also give the amount of money you would make when you get out.

https://www.trade-schools.net/articles/trade-school-cost
^This is a website that helps students find the right trade school for them and gives them pricing. There is a survey that pops up right when you click on the site that helps you decide what track you might want to take. An idea is to give the kids in ACE a survey similar to this by taking data from this site and using it to talk about the varying costs of trade schools depending on the area of study and where the school is.