



A Broward County Public Schools Data Snapshot

BROWARD TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROGRAM (BTIP), 2014-15

Report from Student Assessment & Research

September 2015

9%

of BCPS elementary students received 5-day BTIP notifications in 2014-15

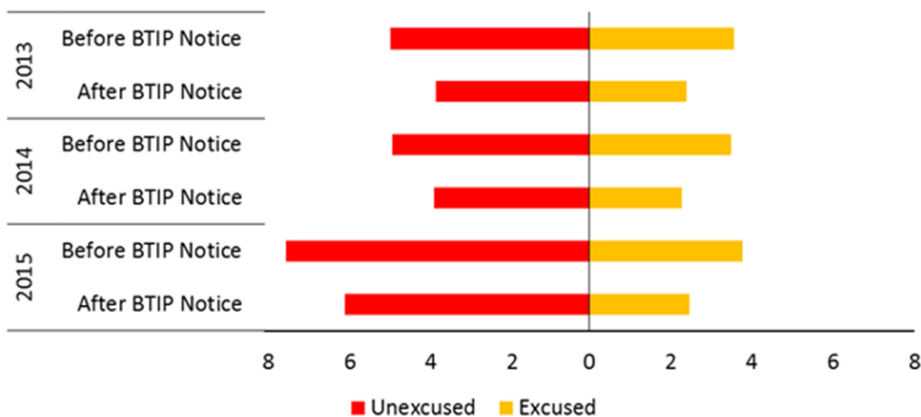
8,388

of BCPS elementary students received 5-day BTIP notices, **down from 19,454** in 2013-14

BTIP at a Glance

- Implementation of the BTIP program changed in the 2014-15 school year to only consider unexcused absences during a marking period to trigger notification.
- This change resulted in fewer BTIP notifications and more total absences prior to intervention. The number of unexcused absences to the 5-day notification was greater in 2014-15 (Median=7) compared to the prior years (Medians=5).
- The greatest proportion of notices were directed towards Black (51% in 2014-15), followed by Hispanic (30% in 2014-15), and White (14% in 2014-15) students. Compared to overall District enrollment, Black students are over-represented and White students are under-represented.
- Both excused and unexcused absences decrease after the 5-day notification.

Figure 6. Comparison of Unexcused to Excused Absences Before and After 5-Day BTIP Notification



Additional Resources

Broward’s Attendance Policy: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sbbcpolicies/docs/Policy%205.5%20Attendance.pdf>

Broward’s Social Work & Attendance: <http://browardstudentservices.com/school-social-work-attendance/>

State Attorney Truancy Intervention Unit: <http://www.sao17.state.fl.us/truancy.htm>

The detailed report is available online at: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sar/>

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent Of Schools

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Signatures on File

October 7, 2015

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Maurice L. Woods
Chief Strategy & Operations Officers

VIA: Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: BROWARD TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROGRAM (BTIP): A BRIEF UPDATE

The BTIP program is designed to address unexcused absences among elementary school students. The program is implemented as a partnership between Broward County Public Schools and the State Attorney's Office. BTIP attempts to improve student attendance through an escalating process of parental/guardian notification and accountability.

The attached Research Brief summarizes data concerning the number of students served by BTIP, the timeliness of intervention, and impact on attendance. A change in the implementation of BTIP in the 2014-15 school year to consider the number of unexcused absences only within a marking period has decreased the number of students served and the impact of the program. Overall, **more than eight thousand kindergarten to eighth grade students were served in 2014-15, down from more than nineteen thousand in the prior year.**

Questions concerning the BTIP program should be directed to **Dr. Laurel Thompson, director Student Services at 754-321-1660**. Questions concerning the attached report should be directed to **Dr. Russell Clement, research specialist, Student Assessment & Research at 754-321-2500**. This report is available on the Student Assessment & Research website at: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sar/releases/briefs/btip2015.pdf>.

RWR/MLW/NB/RWC:rs
Attachments

cc: School Board Members
Senior Leadership Team
Elementary Principals



Research Brief

BROWARD TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROGRAM (BTIP): A BRIEF UPDATE

Regular attendance in school is essential to a student's academic performance. A longitudinal study conducted in the Philadelphia School District between 1994 and 2000 found that students with a higher proportion of unexcused to excused absences were more likely to be at academic risk, particularly in math. This effect was seen as early as elementary school. Evidence as to the link between attendance and academic achievement has mounted (see AttendanceWorks.org for compilation of evidence). Moreover, having a higher proportion of excused absences was positively associated with test scores (Gottfried, 2009). Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) data from 1998-99 through 2003-04 showed a similar relationship between unexcused absences and academic achievement. Unexcused absences were associated with lower FCAT scores, while no association between excused absences and FCAT scores was found (Clement, 2006). In addition to the impact on student academic achievement, truancy (which in Florida is defined as 15 unexcused absences in 90 days), is associated with juvenile crime, gang membership, and drug use (Kronholz, 2011).

To address the unexcused absence problem in BCPS, the State Attorney Truancy Intervention Unit was formed in 1997 as a partnership between the State Attorney and the BCPS to address truancy at 37 elementary schools. In the 2000-01 school year, the Broward Truancy Intervention Program (BTIP) was expanded to all District elementary schools. The purpose of BTIP is to prevent excessive absences through daily attendance monitoring, leveraging of school-based intervention, and parent/guardian notification and accountability.

BTIP follows a hierarchy of intervention. At the basic level, the school attempts to address attendance issues. Upon the accrual of three unexcused absences, school staff notify parents/guardians of Florida law mandating school attendance (FS 1003.26). Upon the accumulation of 5 unexcused absences, BCPS contacts the State Attorney's Office, who in turn delivers a notice (5-Day Notice) to the parents/guardians explaining the requirements of Florida's mandatory attendance law. If 10 or more unexcused absences are accrued, school representatives, case workers, and State Attorney staff meet with the parents/guardians (10-Day Notice) to ensure student attendance. If the child continues to accrue unexcused absences, criminal charges may be brought against the parents/guardians (See the State Attorney Truancy Intervention Unit Website for more information <http://www.sao17.state.fl.us/truancy.htm>).

Prior to the 2014-15 school year, unexcused absences for triggering the generation of the 5-day BTIP notice were counted from the beginning of the school year. To bring the District's practices into alignment with state statute and as directed by the State Assistant Attorney for Truancy, the five unexcused absences must now be accrued within a marking period. This change allows students to potentially accrue more unexcused absences before action is taken.

The following data summary addresses the number, timeliness, and impact of the BTIP notices during the 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 school years.

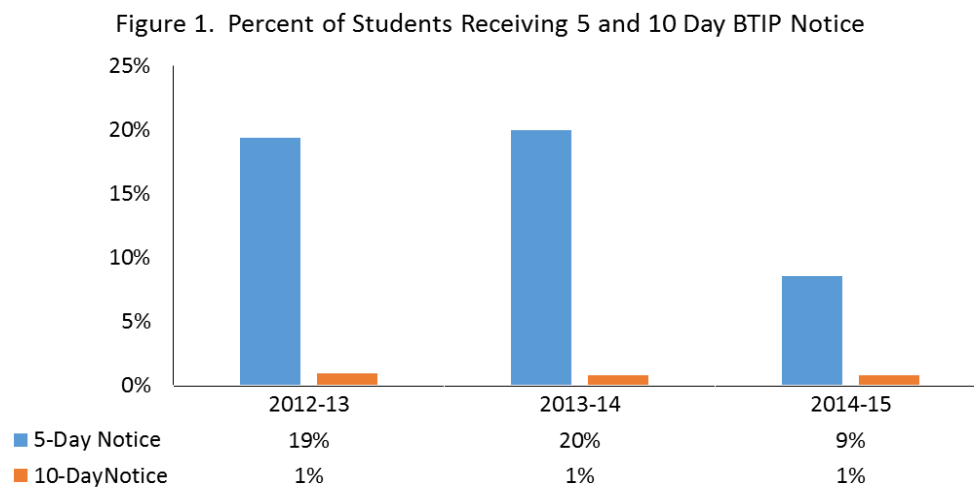
Method

An electronic data file of all students receiving 5- and 10-day BTIP notifications during the 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15 school years were obtained from the Information & Technology (I&T) Department. These data were joined with student attendance, demographics, and school assignment data extracted from the Student Data Warehouse (DWH). A preliminary examination of the data file revealed that a number of students were coded as having received multiple 5-day (approximately 200 each year) and 10-day (approximately 20 each year) BTIP notices. Only the first occurrence of the 5- or 10-day notices were considered for the present analyses. In addition, some students (<20) outside of the grades of KG to 5 were identified as receiving BTIP letters. For the present study, only grades KG to 5 were included.¹

Findings

Question 1: How many students received 5- and 10-day BTIP letters in 2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15?

Figure 1 displays the percent of elementary students who received 5- and 10-day BTIP notices for the three years studied. As expected given the change in requirements for the 5-day BTIP



¹ Older siblings of elementary students who received a BTIP notification were also included in the BTIP process.

notification, the percent of students receiving 5-day notices decreased from 20% to 9% in 2014-15. The percent receiving 10-day notices remained constant at 1% across the three years examined.

Table 1 provides more detailed information on the number of students receiving notices by grade level. Most BTIP 5- and 10-day notices tended to be associated with grade 1 students (in 2014-15, 23% and 25% for 5- and 10-day notices, respectively).

Table 1
BTIP Notices by Grade Level, 2012-13 to 2014-15

Grade Level		5-Day Notice			10-Day Notice		
		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
KG	<i>n</i>	1,908	1,905	909	124	103	87
	%	10%	10%	11%	14%	13%	11%
1	<i>n</i>	4,099	4,291	1,951	244	206	202
	%	22%	22%	23%	27%	26%	25%
2	<i>n</i>	3,454	3,613	1,497	154	141	146
	%	18%	19%	18%	17%	18%	18%
3	<i>n</i>	3,294	3,444	1,416	130	126	126
	%	18%	18%	17%	14%	16%	16%
4	<i>n</i>	3,027	3,168	1,341	135	112	121
	%	16%	16%	16%	15%	14%	15%
5	<i>n</i>	3,080	3,033	1,274	127	117	123
	%	16%	16%	15%	14%	15%	15%
Total	<i>n</i>	18,862	19,454	8,388	914	805	805
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. %'s denote the proportion relative to all students receiving BTIP notices.

Table 2 (next page) displays the breakdown of BTIP notices by student demographic groups. With regard to race/ethnicity, the greatest proportion of notices were directed towards Black (51% in 2014-15), followed by Hispanic (30% in 2014-15), and White (14% in 2014-15) students. Compared to overall District enrollment, Black students are over-represented and White students are under-represented.²

Also displayed in Table 2 are the BTIP notifications for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRL), English Language Learners (ELL), and Students with Disabilities (SWD) compared to their peers. Of the students receiving BTIP 5-day notifications in 2014-15, 88% qualified for FRL, which is an over-representation as FRL students comprised 67% of the grade KG to 5 student population. The proportion of BTIP students who qualified for FRL services increased to 94% for the 10-day notification.

² As of the 2014-15 school year, race/ethnicity composition of students in grades KG to 5 as Asian 4%, Black 38%, Hispanic 31%, Native American <1%, Multi-racial 3%, and White 24%.

A minority of the BTIP notifications were triggered for ELL (16%) and SWD (18%) students. These students' representations among BTIP recipients were similar to their representation in the overall student population (16% and 14% for ELL and SWD, respectively).

Table 2
BTIP Notices by Demographic Group, 2012-13 to 2014-15

		5-Day Notice			10-Day Notice		
		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Race/Ethnicity							
Asian	<i>n</i>	270	299	106	--	--	--
	%	1%	2%	1%	--	--	--
Black	<i>n</i>	9,166	9,358	4,309	548	485	485
	%	49%	48%	51%	60%	60%	60%
Hispanic	<i>n</i>	5,789	6,077	2,524	218	197	187
	%	31%	31%	30%	24%	25%	23%
Multi-racial	<i>n</i>	499	505	225	20	24	27
	%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Native American	<i>n</i>	46	68	23	--	--	--
	%	0%	0%	0%	--	--	--
White	<i>n</i>	3,092	3,147	1,201	121	88	94
	%	16%	16%	14%	13%	11%	12%
Free or Reduced Price Lunch							
FRL	<i>n</i>	15,185	16,169	7,367	800	742	753
	%	81%	83%	88%	88%	92%	94%
Non-FRL	<i>n</i>	3,677	3,285	1,021	114	63	52
	%	20%	17%	12%	13%	8%	7%
English Language Learner							
ELL	<i>n</i>	2,186	3,176	1,322	111	121	103
	%	12%	16%	16%	12%	15%	13%
Non-ELL	<i>n</i>	16,676	16,278	7,066	803	684	702
	%	88%	84%	84%	88%	85%	87%
Students with Disabilities							
SWD	<i>n</i>	3,494	2,903	1,470	199	135	165
	%	19%	15%	18%	22%	17%	21%
Non-SWD	<i>n</i>	15,368	16,551	6,918	715	670	640
	%	82%	85%	83%	78%	83%	80%
Total	<i>n</i>	18,862	19,454	8,388	914	805	805
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note. %'s denote the proportion relative to all students receiving BTIP notices. -- denotes fewer than 10 students.

Question 2: How timely were the BTIP notices?

This question addresses how many unexcused absences are registered before the BTIP notification is generated. Table 3 displays the median, minimum, and maximum number of unexcused absences prior to the generation of the 5- and 10-day BTIP notifications. Although the criteria for the generation of the 5-day BTIP notice changed in 2014-15 to only consider accrual of absences within a marking period, data herein are summarized across the full school year up to the date of the BTIP notification. As expected, the median number of unexcused absences to the 5-day notification was greater in 2014-15 (Median=7) compared to the prior years (Medians=5). The median unexcused absences to the 10-day notice was consistent across school years at 14 to 15.

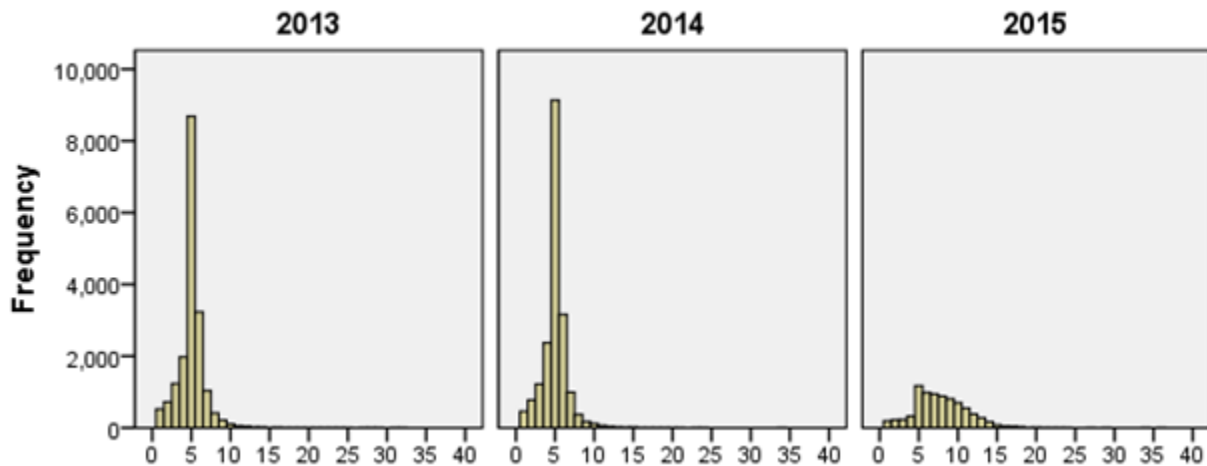
Table 3
Number of Days to Generate BTIP 5-Day and 10-Day Notices

	5-Day Notice			10-Day Notice		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Students*	18,307	18,932	8,055	869	742	755
Median	5	5	7	15	14	15
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum	32	43	36	45	46	46

* In some instances notices were generated after excessive number of excused absences and/or tardies as opposed to unexcused absences.

The minimum and maximum data reveal that some students received notification before the 5- or 10-day criteria were reached, while others received the notifications well after the criteria had been surpassed. Figure 2 displays the distribution of unexcused absences prior to the 5-day notice.

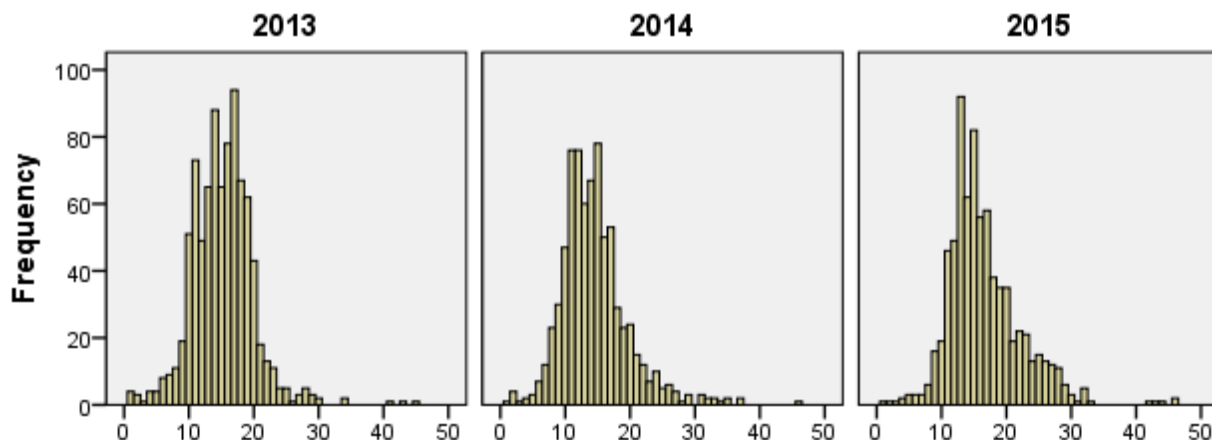
Figure 2. Number of Unexcused Absences Until 5-Day BTIP Notice Generated



Across the three school years, the majority of notifications were triggered upon the fifth unexcused absence. Examination of the data for cases where the notice was generated later than the fifth unexcused absence revealed that in some instances the student transferred to a BCPS traditional school from a charter school and had previously accumulated a number of unexcused absences. Other cases where the notice was generated prior to the fifth day, students may have had a large number of excused absences and/or tardies. These patterns do not account for all irregularities. The difference in distribution of unexcused absences between the 2014-15 and prior school years is largely due to the change in criteria for the accumulation of unexcused absences within a marking period. This again decreases the total number of BTIP notifications produced and proportionally increases the total number of unexcused absence before notification.

Figure 3 displays the distribution of unexcused absences until the 10-day notice. Review of the figure reveals that for each of the three years, there is a large spread in the number of unexcused absences, with a median near 15. As with the 5-day notice, the 10 unexcused absences had to occur within a 90-day period beginning in the 2014-15 school year.

Figure 3. Number of Unexcused Absences Until 10-Day BTIP Notice Generated



Question 3: Does student attendance improve following receipt of a five-day BTIP notice?

The purpose of the BTIP program is to ensure that students are in school. Review of unexcused absences following the BTIP notifications indicate that students are less likely to continue unexcused absences. As displayed in Table 4, the median number of unexcused absences following the 5-day letter is 4 in 2014-15 and 2 in the prior two years. Among those students receiving the 10-day letter, the median number of subsequent unexcused absences was 7 in 2014-15 and 6 in the prior two years. There were, however, students who continued to accumulate unexcused absences, in some instances exceeding 100 recorded unexcused absences in the student database. Figures 4 and 5 display the distributions of unexcused absences following the 5- and 10-day notifications, respectively.

Table 4

Number of Days Unexcused Absences After BTIP 5- and 10-day Letters

	5-Day Letter			10-Day Letter		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Students	18,862	19,454	8,388	914	805	805
Median	2	2	4	6	6	7
Minimum	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum	90	101	121	113	89	100

Figure 4. Number of Unexcused Absences After 5-Day BTIP Notice

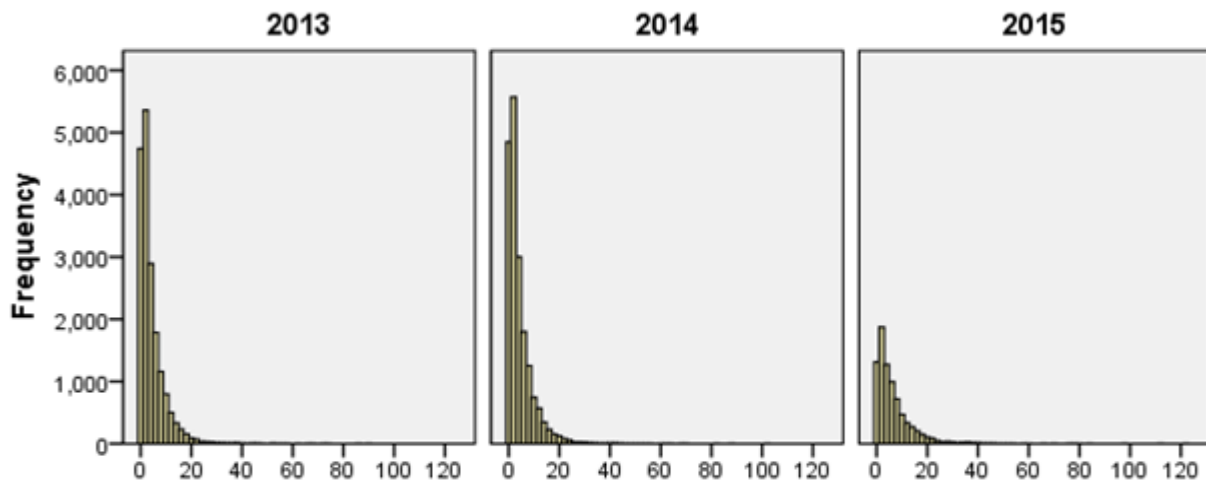
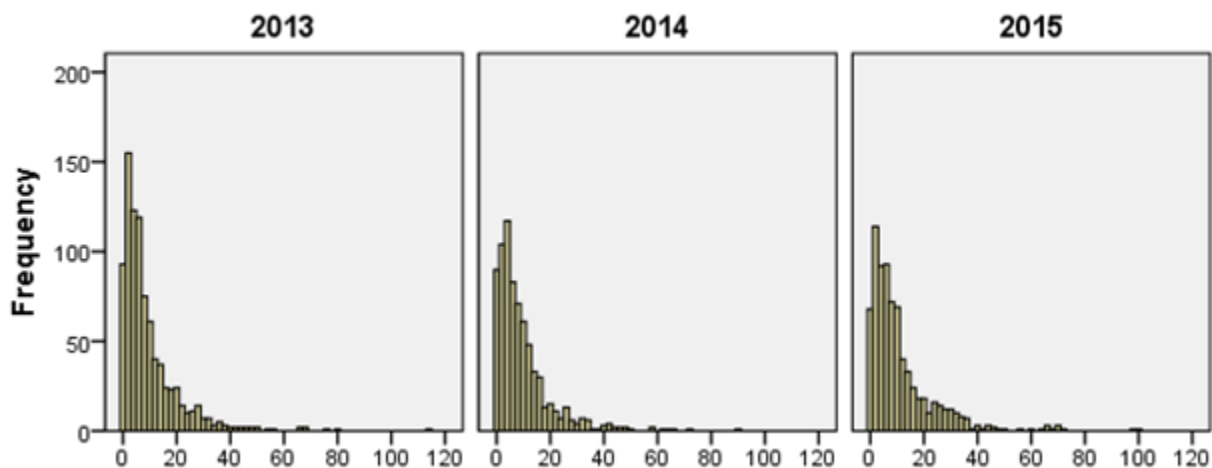


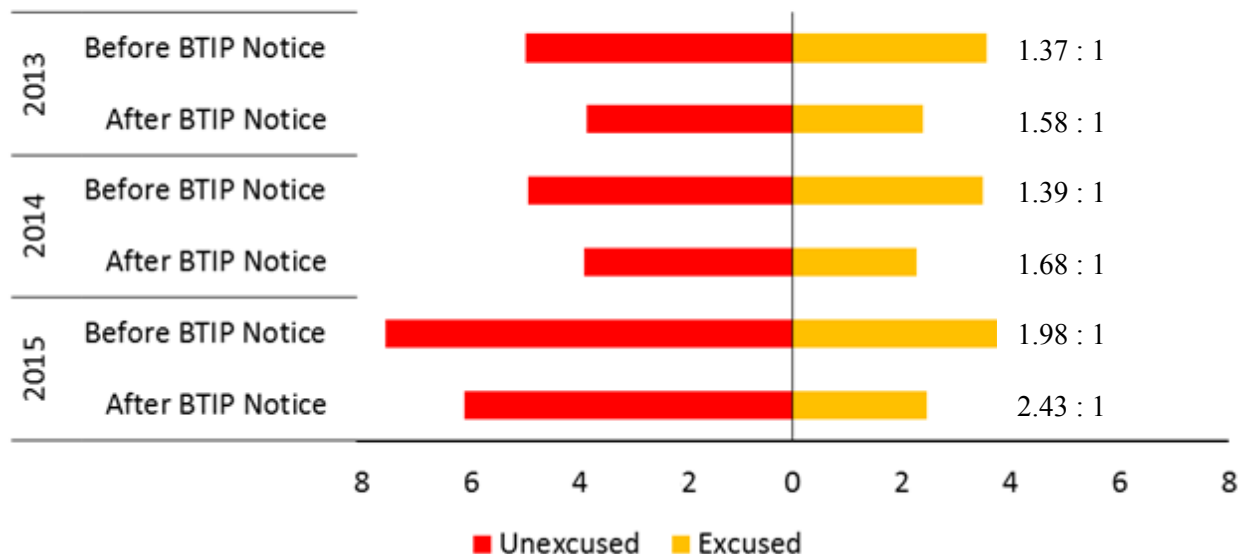
Figure 5. Number of Unexcused Absences After 10-Day BTIP Notice



One possibility is that attendance does not improve following the BTIP notifications, but rather unexcused absences are traded for excused absences. To check this possibility, the ratio of unexcused to excused absences was examined for the three school years. Figure 6 displays the average number of excused (gold bars) and unexcused (red bars) absences. For both excused and unexcused absences, the average number decreases after the 5-day BTIP notice. The ratio

of the number of unexcused absences for each excused absence is also listed next to each bar. Importantly, the number of excused absences does not increase after the 5-day notice. In fact, the ratio of unexcused to excused absences increases suggesting that the number of excused absences decreases faster after the 5-day BTIP than the number of unexcused absences.

Figure 6. Comparison of Unexcused to Excused Absences Before and After 5-Day BTIP Notification



Question 4: Are BTIP notifications related to students’ health issues?

This final question was posed through discussion with the State Attorney General’s Office due to their observations during meetings with families that many parents report health problems with their children that prevent attendance at school. Specifically, many of the reported problems concern respiratory issues. During the 2014-15 school year, 20.4% of the BTIP recipients had some health-related issue reported in DWH, compared to 17.6% of non-BTIP recipients. A look specifically at asthma conditions revealed a prevalence of 10.2% among BTIP recipients, compared to 6.7% among non-BTIP recipients.³ These data indicate a higher incidence of health issues among BTIP participants, suggesting an opportunity for outreach to the affected families to assist with child health needs.

Question 5: Where do the students receiving BTIP notifications attend school?

In Appendix A is a map that displays the distribution of student receiving BTIP notifications by school location. Examination of the map indicates that the BTIP recipients tend to be in the northeast, central core, and southeast regions of the district.

³ These differences are statistically significant, $\chi^2_s > 43, p's < 0.001$.

Discussion

Taken together the data suggest that the BTIP intervention is effective for reducing unexcused absences. Although the majority of students (91%) do not go on to earn a 10-day notification, a substantial proportion do continue to register unexcused absences. Importantly, students do not begin to report more excused absences as unexcused absences decrease. This indicates that continuation of unexcused absences may be outside of the parents' knowledge and additional parental updates on student attendance would be beneficial. During the 2015-16 school year, Student Services will have an increased focus on kindergarten and first grade students to ensure students begin their education careers with a habit of attending school every day. The finding of a higher prevalence of health issues among the BTIP notice recipients indicates that there is a need for outreach and support to these families.

References

- Clement, R.W. (2006). It's not being absent that affects a student's achievement; Florida data show it's whether the absences are excused or unexcused. *ERS Spectrum*, 24, 24-32.
- Gottfried, M.A. (2009). Excused versus unexcused: How student absences in elementary school affect academic achievement. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31, 392 – 415.
- Kronholz, J. (2011) Truants: The challenge of keeping kids in school. *Education Next*, 11, 32-38.

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