Kent School Services Network
Comparison of KSSN and Non-KSSN Schools

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Introduction

The primary goal of the Kent School Services Network (KSSN) is to ensure that students are at school and ready to learn. A key indicator of success of this initiative is in-school attendance. The initiative aims to decrease chronic absenteeism in its schools by providing a community school coordinator, co-located behavioral health services, and in many schools, a Department of Human Services worker and a nurse. By placing these service providers in the school, it is hoped that the school becomes a community hub where parents and students are engaged in learning and their needs can be more easily met to allow students to succeed. The following report details an analysis of the attendance data of KSSN and comparison schools from the 2008 through 2012 school years. In an attempt to see differences over time, this time period was divided into two, two-year categories, a pre-scale up or early period (fall 2008 through spring 2010) and a post-scale up or late period (fall 2010 through spring 2012). The schools in this report include all schools with KSSN services prior to fall of 2012. The comparison schools in these analyses include all schools within the same districts (Grand Rapids, Cedar Springs, Godfrey-Lee, Wyoming, and Kentwood Public Schools) without KSSN services. KSSN schools include:

1. Grand Rapids Public Schools: Coit Elementary*, Campau Park Elementary, Sibley Elementary*, Burton Elementary*, Cesar Chavez Elementary, Southwest Campus Community School (K-8), Harrison Park (K-8)*, Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy (K-8)*, Alger Middle*, and Burton Middle;
2. Cedar Springs Public Schools: Cedar View Elementary, Red Hawk and Cedar Springs Middle;
3. Godfrey-Lee Public Schools: North Godwin Elementary, East Lee Campus/Visionquest Alternative, Lee Middle and High;
4. Wyoming Public Schools: Parkview Elementary; and

Six pilot schools began the KSSN initiative in the 2008-09 school year and are marked above with an asterisk. The remaining schools began the KSSN initiative in the 2010-2011 school year and are thus referred to as the “scale up” schools. Southeast Elementary in the Kelloggsville Public School District is also a KSSN school, but they did not begin their programming until fall of 2012 and are excluded from these analyses.

This report details the general comparisons between KSSN and non-KSSN schools, how those comparisons change when divided by student race, and a within program analysis of how the attendance data varies by Department of Human Services involvement, and between the individual KSSN schools. Although there are 20 schools in the Kent School Services Network, only 18 were included in these analyses due to two schools only recently joining the initiative.
Comparison of KSSN and Non-KSSN schools

There were statistically significant differences in KSSN and Non-KSSN schools on the percent of students in each absenteeism category for each school year. There are four absenteeism categories based on the percent of days a student attended out of all possible days of attendance. Satisfactory absenteeism is defined as being present 95 percent or more of all days possible. Moderate absenteeism is being present 90-95 percent of days possible. Chronic absenteeism is being present 80-90 percent of all days possible, and extreme chronic absenteeism is being present less than 80 percent of days possible. These differences are displayed below in Figure 1. This shows that the pilot KSSN schools had a lower percentage of students in the satisfactory absenteeism category at the start of the initiative (2008-2009 school year) and higher percentages of students in the moderate, chronic, and extreme absenteeism categories. However, the scale up schools, which include a larger number of students than the pilot schools, had satisfactory absenteeism rates that were slightly higher than the non-KSSN schools and slightly lower in the moderate, chronic, and extreme absenteeism categories. When combined, the KSSN schools had a greater percentage of students in the satisfactory and moderate absenteeism categories and a smaller percentage of students in the chronic and extreme absenteeism categories overall than the non-KSSN schools.

![Figure 1: KSSN/Non-KSSN Comparison by Absenteeism Category](image-url)
There were also significant differences in the change in chronic absenteeism over time. In looking at the change in the percent of days attended by year for pilot, scale up and non-KSSN schools, the non-KSSN schools saw a 1.2 percent drop in percent of days attended while the KSSN schools overall saw a 0.2 percent increase in days attended. While this is a small difference, it is statistically significant, describing a change of approximately two more days absent in 2011-2012 than in 2008-2009 for non-KSSN schools, and approximately 0.3 more days attended in KSSN schools. When you further split the KSSN schools into pilot and scale up, the pilot schools saw very little change in percent of days attended over time (0.9 percent decrease over the four years, or 1.71 days fewer, but note that all four years are after the initial implementation) while the scale up schools saw a 2.05 percent (3.9 per day) increase in the number of days attended. What this may further indicate is that attendance is decreasing over time across all schools, but the KSSN initiative may be successful in slowing the decline.

Differences in Racial Equity

Another desired outcome of KSSN is to better serve the needs of minority students in an effort to increase their attendance, engagement, and achievement. Figure 2 below shows the percent of each race/ethnicity that fell into each absenteeism category. This shows that Asian American students have the highest attendance rates, followed by White students. Other races have more similar attendance rates.
These differences can be further clarified by looking at the change in category percentage between the 2008-2010 range and the 2010-2012 range, split by race/ethnicity. This can be seen in Figure 3 below. This shows that for students in KSSN schools, satisfactory absenteeism classification went down for White, African American, and Asian American students. It went up slightly for Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial and “Other” students. This pattern is not reflected in the non-KSSN schools, where satisfactory attendance went up across racial groups. It should be noted that these are percentages within each racial group, so while Asian American KSSN student categorization in the satisfactory attendance group decreased by nearly nine percent, it went from 95 percent to 86 percent, which is still very high comparably. This is potential evidence that more services are needed to reduce educational disparities for students of minority races.

**Figure 3: Difference in Category Percentage by Race/Ethnicity**

![Bar chart showing differences in category percentage by race/ethnicity between KSSN and non-KSSN schools.](image)

**Within KSSN Differences**

**DHS**

Within the 18 included KSSN schools, 12 had Department of Human Services (DHS) service providers working at the school. When comparing KSSN schools with a DHS worker to those
without, there were significant differences in 2008-2010 attendance and absenteeism categories; 2010-2012 attendance and absenteeism categories; and the change in attendance from 2008 to 2012. These significant differences indicated a 1.3 percent decrease in days attended for non-DHS schools (2.5 fewer days attended in 2010-2012 than in 2008-2010) and a 2.6 percent increase in days attended for DHS schools (5 more days attended in 2010-2012 than in 2008-2010), compared with a 1.3 percent decrease in days attended for the Non-KSSN schools.

These results are further shown in Figure 4 below. This shows the percent of students in each absenteeism category for both time periods, organized by whether or not they have a DHS worker on site and compared to the non-KSSN schools.

Figure 4: Comparison of DHS, Non-DHS, and Non-KSSN Schools
The difference between the time periods is then further shown in figure 5. This shows that from the early to the late time periods, the DHS schools saw an increase in satisfactory attendance and a decrease in all three categories of absenteeism. The non-DHS schools show a decrease in the satisfactory absenteeism and increases in all other categories. This may suggest that having a DHS worker on site is helpful (or something associated with that DHS presence) in reducing chronic absenteeism.

**Figure 5: Difference Between Time Periods for DHS, Non-DHS, and Non-KSSN Schools**

Differences Between Grade Levels

Since many schools are divided into different grade breakdowns (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, K-8, etc.), students were recoded into groups based on their grade. This allowed for comparison of more similar students across schools. The grade breakdowns that were analyzed were first through fifth grade, sixth through eighth grade, and ninth through twelfth grade. All other grades were excluded from these analyses. Again there were significant differences in attendance percentages, absenteeism categories, and change in attendance over time within each grading group for both the KSSN and non-KSSN schools, with absenteeism tending to increase as students progress through the grade levels. This is further evidence of the great variability across the individual schools and perhaps indicates a need for intervention early in a student’s education.
Differences Between Individual KSSN Schools

In addition to there being differences between KSSN and non-KSSN schools, there were several statistically significant differences within the KSSN schools. The KSSN schools were different on 2008-2010 attendance and absenteeism categories as well as 2010-2012 attendance and absenteeism categories. The percent of students in each absenteeism category for the 2008-2010 period is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Absenteeism Categories by School for Fall 2008 through Spring 2010

![Figure 7: Absenteeism Categories by School for Fall 2008 through Spring 2010](image-url)
The percent of students in each absenteeism category for the 2010-2012 period is shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Absenteeism Categories by School for Fall 2010 through Spring 2012**

- Satisfactory
- Moderate
- Chronic
- Extreme
Figure 9 below shows the difference in the percent of students in each absenteeism category from the early (fall 2008 through spring 2010) to the late (fall 2010 through spring 2012) periods. Programmatic success would appear as a positive (above the horizontal x-axis) change in satisfactory absenteeism and a negative (below the horizontal x-axis) change in all of the other absenteeism categories. This is best seen in Coit, Sibley, Campau Park, Cesar Chavez, and Lee Middle and High schools. This desirable pattern can still be seen, although to a lesser extent, at Harrison Park, Burton Middle, Ford, Parkview and Red Hawk schools. Martin Luther King Leadership Academy, Burton Elementary, North Godwin shows no notable results in this form, while Alger, Crossroads, East Kentwood Freshman, East Kentwood High School, and East Lee show increases in absenteeism.

Such significant differences amongst the KSSN schools make interpretation difficult. It is possible that the range of attendance changes amongst the KSSN schools artificially deflates the effects that may be seen when comparing KSSN to non-KSSN schools. It is also important to remember
that while scale up efforts began at the start of the 2010 school year, the KSSN initiative programming may not have been fully implemented in the scale up schools for some time.

Conclusions and Next Steps

These results appear to suggest that there is great variability in the effectiveness of KSSN in changing absenteeism. This may be due to programmatic differences that are beginning to be captured by this data (such as having Department of Human Services staff on site), but need further exploration. The next logical step in further assessing the impact of KSSN is to gain a better understanding of the fidelity of implementation across the schools. A fidelity scale would then allow high fidelity KSSN schools to be compared to non-KSSN schools. This would give a better picture of what the true impacts of the initiative may be. Additionally, gaining information on dosage of programming will paint a clearer picture. Meaning, if it is possible to differentiate levels of service provided to students within KSSN schools, it may be possible to isolate which elements of the KSSN initiative are most effective in changing chronic absenteeism rates.

Changes in the MEAP test score standards did not allow for time comparisons in this data. As the new standards have been used for a longer period of time, changes in assessment scores may also be used as a possible indicator of KSSN effectiveness. Another measure of changes in school achievement may be adequate yearly progress (AYP). As the scale up cohort of schools has more time post-implementation greater results may be evident.

Further attention should also be paid to racial disparities. As it is a goal of the KSSN initiative to decrease achievement gaps in students of different racial backgrounds, it would be helpful to gather information about the dosage of programming that minority students receive. This will then allow analysis to tell if KSSN is achieving its goal of targeting traditionally underserved minority students, and if so, what level of programming shows the greatest impact in changing school attendance for those students.