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2021

SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

By

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the College of Education and Human Services

Department of Educational Studies, Leadership, and Counseling

At Murray State University

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

P-20 and Community Leadership

Specialization: Educational Leadership

Under the Supervision of Assistant Professor Stephanie Sullivan

Murray, KY

May 2021

Abstract

This study explores the occurrence of school violence and its impact on academic success and attendance. This study will encompass K-12 academic institutions in the state of Kentucky during the 2018-2019 academic school year, with an in-depth analysis of data submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education by the 171 participating school districts. The participating schools shared data in the form of disciplinary actions, attendance, graduation rates, academic achievement, and other relevant demographics. The collected data was analyzed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference among attendance rate, graduation rate, math ACT benchmark scores, and English ACT benchmark scores when compared to school violence data. The data analysis findings concluded that there were no statistically significant differences among the comparison groups listed. The collected findings will be utilized to determine appropriate measures to take to combat targeted violence and minimize the effects on school aged children.

Keywords: violence, academic success, attendance, absenteeism

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Chapter I: Introduction

Education, school safety, and mental health awareness are topics that have been at the forefront of discussions involving school policy. School safety and security have been prioritized by the violent events that have influenced change and have forced policy makers to analyze protocols. This in-depth analysis has brought about needed change as educational practitioners' race to eliminate incidents of targeted violence among K-12 academic institutions. Many changes, including the implementation of new policies and procedures, have been the direct effects of violence. The insertion of violence, mental health issues, and mass shootings into school environments have been a catalyst for this change. Macklem (2011) indicated that there is a clear shift in the desensitization of school-aged teenagers, as compared to the generations of their parents and grand-parents. Desensitization is lessening the sensitivity of an individual to another individual, place, or idea. The causes of desensitization have largely been placed upon the increased exposure of this generation of students to violence through mass media outlets and video games (Macklem, 2011). Macklem theorized that this generation of adolescents are exposed to more acts of violence via the media that lessens the value of the violent act.

To improve academic achievement and advancements among students enrolled in Kentucky K-12 academic institutions, it is critical to emphasize the investigation into the link between school violence and anticipated success. The gap between academic success and exposure to violence will be highlighted. The topic of school violence is a sensitive topic and one that may not garnish the attention that is warranted.

Context

Violence has been prevalent in the lives of young adults from multiple outlets. Local news stations and newspapers have advertised violence and portrayed death as a commonality in society. Because of this increased exposure, students in today's instructional institutions have not been as sensitive to acts of bullying and violence; meaning that these school-aged students do not view violence as intensely or with as much severity as earlier generations. These individuals may lack the ability to empathize or feel the impending pain, both emotional and physical, that it caused to the victims as a result of acts of violence (Furlong, Morrison, & Pavelski, 2000).

There are identifiable factors used to create a more realistic picture of institutional safety and security. A large component of this picture is the insertion and establishment of the school resource officer. Due to the increasing school safety and school violence issues, districts across the nation have incorporated school resource officers to assist with this problem. The school resource officer is a sworn law enforcement officer, according to Theriot (2016), and is utilized in a preventative strategy against school violence. Theriot conducted a study to highlight the relationship and impact of the school resource officer on the connectedness of the student's feelings toward law enforcement and student life. Theriot theorized that positive interactions with school resource officers contributed significantly to the climate of the school. The school's resource officer is a vital component to the safety of the school, and the quick response of the law enforcement agency is critical when dangerous situations arise, and lives are in danger.

School security before the Columbine High School massacre of 1999 was completely different from the protocols and implemented strategies for safety that can be observed in schools today. The Columbine High School incident was a turning point for the way in which communities viewed education, safety, and the response to targeted acts of violence. During the

tragic mass shooting, the amount of time spanning from the first gunshot to the entry of the SWAT team accounted for 47 minutes (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2019). During this 47-minute moment in time, the American public watched as the events continued to unfold. This lapse of time forced the American public to rethink and overhaul its current policies and procedures on school violence. The reaction to this tragedy paved the way for safer and more responsive school policies and collaboration with school officials. K-12 educational institutions in the state of Kentucky are required to practice lockdown drills that are designed to simulate a crisis in which there is an intruder in the building. Preparation and practice inform schools on how to respond to a crisis event, but these events, when sporadic and unplanned, may cause confusion and can lead to further injuries (Volungis & Goodman, 2017).

Another statistic regarding school shootings from 1970 to 2020 provided by The Center for Homeland Security and Defense (2020) was the age of school shooters at the time of crisis. The most common age of active shooters was 17 years of age (164), followed by 16 years of age (156), and then 15 years of age (134). According to the Center for Homeland Security and Defense (2020) report that documented school incidents with firearms, 1033 reported the involvement of a handgun. A national breakdown of documented incidents of school violence involving a firearm placed California at the top of the list with 163, Texas was a close second with 144, and Florida had 95.

The increase of information regarding school shootings, the victims, and the environments allowed professionals from many different backgrounds to come together in an attempt to formulate a plan that could save the lives of children and minimize damage caused by mental health issues. Students, teachers, and staff members are forever changed after dealing with the crisis of a school shooting or targeted violence. The sounds, sights, and horrors of the

terror do irreparable damage and impact every person involved in the tragedy. The result of this can change professions, decrease enrollment, decrease test scores, and impact teacher and staff retention (Volungis & Goodman, 2017).

The United States Secret Service, in conjunction with the U. S. Secret Services, National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), provided a detailed analysis of the *Safe School Initiative* (2002) and *Protecting America's Schools* (2019). The Safe Schools Initiative encompassed 37 incidences of targeted violence, committed by 41 attackers that occurred between June 1974 and June 2000 (U. S. Secret Services, National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). Protecting America's Schools surpassed the earlier Safe School Initiative and examined 41 incidents committed by 41 attackers that occurred between 2008 and 2017. The research conducted by the NTAC (2019) concluded that though there were many similarities, one of the most important similarities found was that there was no profiler information for a school attacker identified in any of the incidents dating back to 1974 (U. S. Secret Services National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). The NTAC identified the percentages of the attackers within the study as drug abusers, criminals, or individuals suffering from mental health and found that they were similar in proportion. When examining the 82 documented attackers from the abovementioned study, NTAC (2019) found that 100% of the attackers displayed troubling behaviors throughout school. It also indicated that the students who were identified in this study, displayed signs of concern to a peer or friend. Also, these individuals communicated their concerns and intent with someone prior to committing them.

School shootings have been in American culture for many decades, but it wasn't until 2013 that schools in Virginia were required to use threat assessment teams in K-12 schools under state law. In 2013, the state of Virginia mandated that K-12 academic institutions create and

implement threat assessment teams to combat school violence (U. S. Secret Services, National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). The NTAC (2019), upon review and analysis of the Parkland High School shooting in Parkland, FL, concluded that this specific shooting and other similar acts of violence could have been prevented. These acts could have possibly been prevented since the attackers likely had some history of violence, drug use or abuse, and other concerning behavior. The NTAC lists other possible indicators for student attackers as emotional or behavioral factors, an inability to maintain stability in the home, and past encounters with law enforcement.

An in-depth analysis of targeted school violence by the NTAC (2019) provided insight into the background of school attackers in order to find similarities. The analysis found eight violent attackers (23%) were arrested or charged for infractions that included offenses such as marijuana possession, assault, school disruption, trespassing, and disturbing the peace. Eight attackers (23%) received disciplinary referrals or formal documentation from school administration during their academic career. Eleven (31%) were disciplined for incidents that were violent or threatening. Threatening or violent behavior included use of violent language, inappropriate and angry outbursts, threatening a teacher or school, and drawing pictures that included killings. The statistics collected from the study indicated that identified attackers often displayed inappropriate behavior that resulted in disciplinary action from school officials or law enforcement officers (The National Threat Assessment Center, 2019).

NTAC (2019) stated that ten incidents where identified in which students in the school knew that the attacker was being bullied yet did not intervene. Of these events, the types of bullying identified by students included verbal abuse, physical abuse, social, poverty, and cyberbullying (U. S. Secret Services National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). The Secret

Service, in conjunction with the NTAC (2019), has concluded that threat assessments and the use of threat assessment teams in K-12 institutions were the most effective ways to prevent targeted incidences of violence. A key finding from the Safe School Initiative review was that there was rarely an incident of targeted violence where the actions of the attacker(s) were sudden or impulsive. Because of the anomaly, the NTAC felt as though incidents of targeted violence, in some instances, could have been avoided or detected much sooner.

States across the nation have adopted new policies and anti-bullying laws to combat the issue of bullying. State governments have categorized bullying and cyberbullying as actions that occur on the premises of the schools, on school-sponsored transportation, at school-sponsored events such as games or dances, and that disrupt the educational process and order of the school. Kentucky statute 525.080 states:

> (1) A person is guilty of harassing communications when, with intent to intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm another person, he or she: (a) Communicates with a person, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, telegraph, mail, or any other form of electronic or written communication in a manner which causes annoyance or alarm and serves no purpose of legitimate communication; (b) Makes a telephone call, whether or not conversation ensues, with no purpose of legitimate communication; or (c) Communicates, while enrolled as a student in a local school district, with or about another school student, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, the Internet, telegraph, mail, or any other form of electronic or written communication in a manner which a reasonable person under the circumstances should know would cause the other student to suffer fear of physical harm, intimidation, humiliation, or embarrassment and which serves no purpose of legitimate communication. (2) Harassing communications is a Class B misdemeanor.

The introduction of the 21st century saw a change in perspective and thoughts about trauma and mental health. A survey conducted in 2013 concluded that 41.2% of children had been victims of physical assault within the last calendar year, with 10.1% of those children reporting injury during the incident and 6.2% of those students being victimized with the use of a weapon (Ridgard, Laracy, Dupaul, Shapiro & Power, 2015). Considering the number of school-aged students that could be affected by trauma, there must be more emphasis on creating laws and procedures to further protect these children from those types of situations.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine data concerning behavior incidents in comparison to academic success and attendance. Furthermore, the findings from this research were utilized to determine if school violence had a significant effect on the academic success of K-12 students. This research was significant as it can be used to direct conversations related to providing a safe environment for students to be educated and intervening to ensure equitable academic success following events of targeted violence. The completion of this study provided a more detailed look into school violence and its correlation to academic success. This study encompassed the analysis of collected data to determine if there was a correlation between school violence incidents and student academic success and attendance.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students who participated in academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences?

Research Question 2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the math achievement, as indicated by ACT math scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts?

Research Question 3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the reading achievement, as indicated by ACT reading scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts?

Research Question 4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the graduation rate of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to students who attended small incident school districts?

Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be no statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students who participated in academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the math achievement, as indicated by ACT math scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the reading achievement, as indicated by ACT reading scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts.

Hypothesis 4. There will be no statistically significant difference in the graduation rate of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to students who attended small incident school districts.

Conceptual Framework

The United States Department of Education (2020) theorized that physical conflict permeates schools due to the aggressive nature of children who are at risk for chronic violence issues, chronic absenteeism or delinquency, and other negative outcomes. This paper created a conceptual framework for the understanding of school violence and its impact on academic success and attendance. The United States Department of Education conceptualized violence and identified emotion regulation, social information prevention, and skills training to combat the negative effects of violence. Violence has been identified as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, underdevelopment or deprivation. Increasing awareness of school violence among students, community, parents, and staff members focused on creating a safer and more secure learning environment to maximize learning potential among all students.

Definitions

Violence. The Kentucky Department of Education defined violence as acts to include first degree assault, weapons, harassment/bullying, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco as incidents involving violence.

Academic success.   Academic success has been defined as the performance of Kentucky students in the areas of math and reading, as measured by proficiency on the ACT benchmark assessment in grades 11 and 12.

Attendance. Attendance has been measured by the percentage in which students are present during the school year.

Summary

In summary, violence has been increasingly prevalent in today's society and has contributed to challenges and situations of indifference among K-12 students. Each of these students have managed these challenges differently, leading to different outcomes. Some of these outcomes were positive and constructive, while others were negative and destructive in nature. The incorporation of social media and mass media outlets provided a stage to which violence was not introduced in previous decades. Students in American schools have faced instances of bullying at staggering rates. According to the U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center (2019), roughly 20% of students reported being bullied. Another contributing factor to adversity in academic success was chronic absenteeism and the enormous number of students who fall into this category. Students who were chronically absent or missing more than six days of school from grades eight to twelve, were seven times more likely to drop out of school than students who did not miss six or more days of school. This study investigated the phenomena of targeted violence and the effect that it had on American adolescents.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter highlighted the issues of school safety and violence, bullying, mental health, policies and procedures of Kentucky schools, attendance and absenteeism, academics, and graduation rates of students. The information discussed throughout chapter two provided a historical overview of school violence and the impact that it had on academic success and attendance. The educational experience that students received in Kentucky school institutions was greatly impacted by the occurrence and significance of school violence. Throughout this chapter, specific incidences that created change were highlighted.

School Safety

When discussing the issue of school safety and school violence, it was important to know how these terms will be utilized in modern context and conversation. Recent research conducted by May (2014) defined school safety as the safety of the school settings, in regard to incidences of harassment, bullying, violence, and substance use, as supported by relevant research and an assessment of validity. This definition encompassed many categories identified by the Kentucky Department of Education when determining the number of relevant incidences that threaten an institution's safety. Schools have incorporated state and federal policies and procedures that were implemented to enhance safety. Research conducted by May (2014) indicated that though individuals could readily identify incidences of violence or breaches in school safety, these same individuals could not identify a single incident in which a violent situation occurred after a responsible adult was alerted to the danger.

Volungis and Goldman (2017) stated that although youth violence rates continued to decrease in the United States, it remained the second leading cause of death for adolescents. Often overlooked was the influx of school violence within K-12 institutions across the nation and

the impending effect this violence posed to mental health and academic achievement. The

school violence epidemic encompassed sexual harassment, bullying, gang violence, verbal

assault and harassment, and fighting. School violence has been investigated and researched by

many different individuals throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century.

School violence placed a tremendous amount of stress and unwanted feelings of being in

an unsafe environment upon students and teachers. Entities, such as the local and national news,

played a major role in the perception of school safety while causing panic and concern among

students, parents, educators, political leaders, and community members (Borum, Cornell,

Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010).

School Violence and the Media

Columbine was the first nationally publicized school shooting and it dramatically

impacted the lens in which school and district personnel viewed school safety (Borum et al.,

2010). April 20, 1999 marked one of the most tragic and publicized school shootings and

displays of school violence in modern American history. Located near the southwestern portion

of Denver, Colorado, at the base of the Rocky Mountains, lies Jefferson County. Jefferson

County was a community that housed roughly 500,000 residents and most importantly,

Columbine High School. This high school became the scene of a horrific crime that ruined the

perception of school safety. On that day, the action of two students, Dylan Klebold, 17, and Eric

Harris, 18, lead to the deaths of 12 students and one staff (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2019). Local

and national news media flooded the scene with vans, crews, and helicopters.

As the nation watched in horror, this incident subsequently took over most media sources

and the media outlets flooded televisions and radios with information regarding the shooters, the

students, and the school. Though the cameras, news vans, and reporters were there to report on

the news, this event signified a troubling issue in American society. Lawrence and Birkland (2004) indicated that media agendas are defined by the surrounding events that spark intense media coverage and pressure policymakers to search for policy responses to these events. Because of this, Lawrence and Birkland stated that journalists and policymakers possess the ability to prioritize agenda items, as well as define these issues. Unknowing to the producers, analysts, and anchors working the media outlets, the columbine tragedy story in which they captured would later fuel more horrendous acts of violence on school soil. Many years later, two more mass school shootings occurred in K-12 institutions in the United States, and Columbine still lingered. Seung-Ho, the Virginia Tech shooter, and Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook shooter, both had an unhealthy fascination with Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2019).

Each school shooting was a tragedy, but some garnished more media attention than others. Nikolas Cruz, a gunman at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, opened fire in the high school killing 17 people and wounding 17 others. Nikolas was not a currently enrolled student at the school, as he was previously expelled for disciplinary reasons. He was however, able to get on campus after exiting an Uber ride outside of the school with a backpack filled with magazines and a duffel bag packed with the legally purchased AR-15 semi-automatic rifle that was used in the shooting (History.com, 2019). Cruz was able to murder 11 of the victims and injure 13 in just two minutes of chaos, with the total event lasting four minutes. Cruz slipped into the crowd of panicked teenagers and staff members and was later seen at a Wal-Mart nearly 22 minutes after the last shot. Afterwards, he was seen at a Subway for a drink and later at a McDonald's restaurant (History.com, 2019).

Aside from the deaths and injuries, the most disturbing component of the Parkland shooting was the reaction of the school resource officer. Broward Sheriff's deputy school resource officer, Scot Peterson, was accused of retreating while Cruz was attacking students. Peterson was later arrested and charged with neglect of a child, culpable negligence, and perjury for his actions (History.com, 2019).

School Violence and Firearms

Resembling the school demographics of Columbine High School before April 20, 1999, Parkland High School was centered in what was considered the safest city in the state. Surviving students and community members of Stoneman Douglas began a movement and became activists for gun safety legislation. The efforts resulted in pleas to the legislators and lawmakers. These efforts did not go unnoticed, the perseverance of the students and community resulted in Florida Governor Rick Scott signing a bill that would impose a new 21-year-old legal age requirement for gun purchases. Along with the change to the age requirement for purchasing firearms, there was a three-day waiting period enforced on all firearm transactions in the state of Florida, in addition to, permitting the arming of some school personnel (History.com, 2019). School shootings have been present in the educational system in America for many years. The following table lists documented incidents in which firearms were used in an act of targeted violence in American K-12 institutions (Centers for Homeland Securities and Defense, 2020).

Table 1. Incidents Including Firearms

Date of Incident	Location	Event	Deaths and Injuries
January 29, 1979	San Diego, CA	Grover Cleveland El	Adults - 2, Students - 8, 1 officer wounded
October 31, 1980	Hueytown, AL	Hueytown High	1 student wounded, Shooter takes life
March 19, 1982	Las Vegas, NV	Valley High	Adult -1, Students - 2, 2 students wounded

January 20, 1983	St. Louis, MO	Parkway South Jr	Student - 1, Shooter takes life, 1 student wounded
January 21, 1985	St. Louis, MO	Goddard Junior High	Adult - 3, Student 1wounded
November 27, 1985	Spanaway, WA	Spanaway Jr High	Students - 2, Shooter takes own life
May 9, 1986	Fayetteville, NC	Pine Forest High	Students - 3
April 17, 1987	Detroit, MI	Murray Wright High	Student - 1, 2 students wounded.
December 16, 1988	Virginia Beach, VA	Atlantic Shores Christian School	Adult - 1, 1 adult wounded
January 17, 1989	Stockton, CA	Cleveland Elementary	Students - 5, 29 students wounded, the student takes his own life
February 2, 1996	Moses Lake, WA	Frontier Middle	Adult - 1, Students - 2
October 1, 1997	Pearl, MS	Pearl High School	Students - 2, 7 students wounded, and shooter kills his mother
December 1, 1997	Paducah, KY	Heath High School	5 students wounded
March 24, 1998	Jonesboro, AR	Westside Middle	Students – 4
April 20, 1999	Littleton, CO	Columbine High	Students - 13, Adults - 1, 21 wounded, killers take their own lives (2)
March 25, 2001	Santee, CA	Santana High School	Students - 2, 13 wounded
December 5, 2001	Springfield, MA	Springfield High	Adult – 1
April 14, 2003	New Orleans, LA	John McDonough Sr. High School	Student 1, 3 wounded
September 24, 2003	Cold Spring, MN	Recork High School	Student – 2
March 21, 2005	Red Lake, MN	Red Lake High	Student - 5 Adult - 4 including teacher, grandparents, and unarmed security guard
April 16, 2007	Blacksburg, VA	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	Students - 32, shooter kills himself
February 27, 2012	Chardon, OH	Chardon High School	Students - 3, 2 additional students wounded

December 14, 2012	Newton, CT	Sandy Hook Elementary	Students - 20, Adults - 7, including the shooter's mother, the shooter takes his own life
October 21, 2013	Sparks, NV	Sparks Middle School	Adult -1, 2 students wounded, the shooter takes his own life.
December 13, 2013	Centennial, CO	Arapahoe High	Student - 1 shooter takes his own life
May 27, 2014	Barbara, CA	University of California Santa Barbara	Student - 6. 14 students wounded; the shooter takes his own life
June 10, 2014	Troutdale, OR	Reynolds High	Student - 1, 14 students wounded, the shooter takes his own life
October 24, 2014	Marysville, WA	Marysville-Pilchuck	Students - 4, 1 critical injury
April 10, 2017	San Bernardino, CO	North Park Elementary School	Adult - 1, Student – 1
January 23, 2018	South Benton	Marshall County High	Students - 2, 18 injured
February 14, 2018	Parkland, FL	Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School	Students - 14, Adults 1– 14 students and three teachers killed
May 18, 2018	Santa FE, TX	Santa Fe High	Students - 8, Adults - 2, 10 others wounded

Bullying

Bullying has been a continuous problem in American schools since the 1970s. It has been

accompanied with serious and ongoing problems for youth and adolescent students. Wolke and

Lereya (2015) studies on the concept of bullying and the effects after having concluded that

bullying has harmful effects on the development of adolescents and demonstrates the potential

for adverse consequences throughout the life of the adolescent. It was conceptualized that

different definitions of bullying, across different cultures and countries, contributed to the

difficulty of creating and implementing intervention programs. Further analysis of research

concluded that inconsistencies among the definitions can lead to miscommunication among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. Wolke and Lereya (2015) identified bullying as a systematic abuse of power. It was further described as aggressive behavior or the intentional doing of harm by peers that is carried out repeatedly and involves an imbalance of power (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Bullying is a traumatic event that renders its victims powerless and subjects them to low self-esteem and depression. Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston (2008) indicated that bullying events are memories that will never fade away and that bullying is a lasting memory that will follow its victims for a lifetime.

Bullying is a concept that is found in many cultures and societies throughout the world, located in both modern and ancient history (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). An individual who is described as a bully is referred to as someone who is seeking to gain a higher social status than what is acquired and the accompanying dominance. This individual also attempts to gain access to resources, secure survival, and reduce stress as stated by Wolke and Lereya (2015). School bullies are usually popular, have good social and emotional understandings of the world, and interestingly, do not have a conduct disorder. Bullying does not have a specific socioeconomic group, nor does it focus on specific ethnic groups (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Wolke and Lereya (2015) concluded that children and adolescents who experienced bullying were consistently found to be at a higher risk than their peers for common somatic problems, colds, psychosomatic, headaches, stomach aches, and sleeping issues.

Bullying is a concept that must be addressed, and its ramifications may contribute to school violence. The student population of the 21st century is unique in many ways and has a completely different educational experience than the generations preceding them. The greatest change among these eras in American education has been the advancements in technology.

Technology has been the driving force of change, and it has greatly assisted in reshaping society (Volungis & Goldman, 2017). Computers, tablets, and smartboards frequent educational classrooms and have been utilized by educational professionals regularly. The influx of technology in education has opened the door for social media to enter schools. Social media ushered in a completely new type of issue, which is known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the use of electronic communication to harass or bully another person. This can be in the form of messaging services, photographs, or videos that are used for intimidation or that are threatening in nature. Students and adolescents are more likely to engage in acts of bullying or harassment when it is done through technology and from a safe distance (Kowalski, et al., 2008). It is easier to display these actions behind a cell phone, computer, or screen of a tablet.

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center (2019) concluded that 96% of American adults own a cell phone, with 81% owning a smartphone.   This statistic depicted a society that is highly connected to digital information. Of the 96% of Americans who owned cellular devices, 72% admitted to the use of social media platforms on the device. With such increased use of social media, it was easy to conclude that there was an increase in cyberbullying among adolescents. This increase has contributed to the increase of teen suicide attempts in the United States. The question that arises is what can be done to minimize cyberbullying and its effect on school violence.

Bullying or acts of violence have happened to all categories of citizens but have occurred more among certain populations (Kowalski et al., 2008). Teen suicide accounted for 6,200 deaths among adolescents and young adults from the age of 15 to 24 in 2017 (United Health Foundation, 2020). Although bullying does not lead to teen suicide in every instance, the increase in suicide attempts among racial and ethnic groups and individuals who identified as

lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender indicated that bullying was a risk factor for teen mental health. There have been many changes in sexuality or choice of gender in recent years that have sparked many debates regarding validity, acceptance, and morality. American citizens have constantly put their thoughts and beliefs against those of others and have often voiced their acceptance or denial of the thought process of others. This does not change when dealing with adolescents and can often become more intense as children do not understand the psychology of mental health and its effect on physical health. Children are thrust into a unique stage of life where the individual begins to form sexuality and identity. President Barack Obama became the first United States president to incorporate transgender into his vocabulary when he publicly called for respect and protections for individuals identifying as transgender (Dragowski & Phillips, 2015). This statement made by the former President of the United States was a bold statement made by an individual with much influence and political power. The aftermath of this statement sparked the increase of awareness of youth who labeled themselves as transgender. According to Dragowski and Phillips (2015), transgender students are students whose gender identities do not match their given birth gender. These students have been subjected to reticule, bullying, and harassment from others as they struggle to associate with a specific gender. Bullying, particularly through social media, is a trending topic among school and community leaders.

Positive Behavior Supports

Many school-wide behaviors systems have existed to help reinforce positive behavior while trying to dissuade negative behaviors. For over a quarter of a century, America's number one concern facing public schools has been discipline. The root of the problem used to be rule breaking. Now many of today's students need more than thorough and consistent discipline. As

a result, behavior management has tremendously changed over the years to reflect positive behavioral instruction. As educators seek new ways to move beyond traditional "punishment," new opportunities are being provided for all children to learn self-discipline. Broader, proactive, positive school-wide discipline systems that include behavioral support have been introduced. The multiple types of school-wide behavior management have seemed to be promising avenues for achieving the dual goals of teaching self-discipline and managing behavior. Although there have been different variations of school-wide systems of behavioral support, most have definite features in common. Emphasis on consistency, both throughout the building and across classrooms, is one of those features. The entire school staff is expected to implement strategies that will be uniformly executed. Consequently, these methods have necessitated professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership for this innovation to take hold (Fitzsimmons, 1998).

Unfortunately, however, there has been no magic wand that single-handedly removed the barriers to learning that occurred when behaviors were disrupting the learning environment. Because the climate of each learning environment is different, a one size fits all approach has been less effective than interventions based on the needs of an individual school. The emphasis on school-wide systems of support that included proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment has been one of the leading advances in school-wide discipline. A variety of positive behavior support for all students within a school has been implemented in areas including the classroom and non-classroom settings, hallways, buses, and restrooms (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2014).

Fitzsimmons (1998) stated that Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) refers to a system of school-wide processes and individualized instruction designed to prevent and decrease problem behavior and to maintain appropriate behavior. This school-wide behavior management plan does not have a given set of practices. Instead, it is a team-based development designed to address the unique needs of individual schools. Teams are established with empirically endorsed practices and, through the EBS process, a school-wide plan is developed. Whatever approach is taken, a total staff commitment is needed to manage behavior. Expectations and rules should be clearly defined and communicated. Consequences and procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors should be well-defined and should have an instructional component in place for helping students learn self-control and/or social skill strategies. Lastly, EBS should have a support plan to address the needs of students with chronic, challenging behaviors (Fitzsimmons, 1998).

Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) is a system of planning and problem solving that includes direct teaching of social behaviors. The basic PBIS approach is to utilize proactive, research-based strategies to teach clearly defined behavioral expectations. One of the most important parts of PBIS is that it establishes ongoing behavior support that can be utilized by all students, staff, volunteers, parents, and community members. Research has shown that PBIS works because when a school climate is positive and predictable, students feel safer, have greater academic performance, show high test results, and make better behavior choices. Schools implementing PBIS show a gain in instructional time, a reduction in out of school suspensions and discipline referrals and show a decrease in referrals to special education. PBIS promotes parental involvement, as well. Parents or guardians are key sources of information about their child, are their child's first teacher, and hold strengths and interests that can

contribute to their child's educational process and success. Research has suggested that a child's academic success, positive behavior, self-esteem, attendance, and motivation has increased with parent involvement in a child's educational experience (Fitzsimmons, 1998). When schools and families have collaborated to support learning, children have tended to succeed not only in school but also in life (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020).

Throughout the history of the American public education system, there have been many different incidences of violence and mistreatment of different populations of students. A population that has often been overlooked is the special education or children with disabilities population. A study conducted by Reiter and Lapidot-Lefler (2007) investigated the phenomenon of harassment with students identified with having intellectual disabilities and the effects on social skills. Harassment is a common manifestation of violence and is defined as an aggressive behavior that is consistent and with the intention of harm over a less dominating individual (Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2007). Individuals who are bullied are usually unable to defend themselves from attackers or associate with a physical or mental disability.

The study conducted by Reiter and Lapidot-Lefler (2007) indicated that 81% of boys aged five to seventeen and 72% of girls aged five to seventeen identified as victims of harassment at least once during this time frame. Reiter and Lapidot-Lefler also surveyed students regarding being the harasser, in which, 29% of students participating indicated that they had harassed or bullied another student in the previous 30 days. Bullies often displayed aggressive behavior towards their peers and had an overall positive outlook on violence (Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2007).

According to the Kentucky Department of Education (2020), 81,363 students with disabilities account for roughly 13.6% of total students in the state of Kentucky. The number of Kentucky students with disabilities mirrors that of the nation's percentage of 12.9%. Bullying can have a profound and lasting effect on students identified as a student with disabilities. (Roekel, Scholte, & Didden, 2009). Roekel et al. (2009) concluded that prior research on bullying pertained only to the general education setting with little attention focused on the special education setting or students. Roekel et al. (2009) stated that victimization is far more prevalent in children with health care needs, specific learning impairment, learning disabilities, and mental health issues.

Roekel et al. (2009) concluded that students that have autism spectrum disorder have a more difficult time when dealing with incidences of bullying because they have deficits in developing normal social interactions and relationships with peers. Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) also have deficits in understanding the behavior of others, therefore creating difficult social interactions. ASD students display aggressive behavior and have limited insight into social processes. The development of relationships, particularly of friendships, creates a barrier for children with ASD and increases the risk of students with disabilities to victimization. The study conducted by Roekel et al. (2009) indicated that 94% of children that were diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome or a nonverbal learning disability were victimized four times more often as compared to nondisabled peers.

Combatting School Violence

In a survey conducted by Williams, Schneider, Wornell, and Langhinrichsen,-Rohling (2018) on school safety, 24.7% of participants answered that they felt unsafe and 14.4% of answers reflected that students avoided attending school due to this feeling within the last month.

Within the questions located on the survey were questions about bullying, relations, rules and expectation clarity, rules consistency, school environment, and student sense of belonging. An in-depth analysis found that perceptions of safety increased when participants reported positive relationships with teachers and administrators. Participants who felt safe while attending educational institutions cited things such as classroom engagement and academic success as reasons for the conclusions (Williams et al., 2018).

A better overview of character and backgrounds will allow educational professionals who consistently interact with the traumatized students to have a better understanding of the cues that tend to be present among school shooters. School violence has plagued the United States school system for decades, prompting the insertion of modern psychology to figure out how to combat the epidemic. The utilization of psychology imposes the thought process of seeking first to understand (Furlong, Morrison, & Pavelski, 2000). The theory of understanding derives from identifying the root of the issue to prevent similar situations from occurring or at least to minimize the effects.

The turn of the century ushered in many different ideas, concerns, and predictions regarding school safety. According to Furlong et al. (2000), a goal for the year 2000 was that every institution, under the umbrella of education within the United States of America, would consist of schools that were free of drug and alcohol, unauthorized firearms, and dangerous environments in order to promote the learning of students. This was a challenge for K-12 and post-secondary institutions throughout the nation; however, addressing the deficits in policy and procedures assisted in progress towards meeting the goal set forth by the panel.

To gain a better understanding of the concept of school violence and its impact on academic performance, it was necessary to deconstruct and analyze the meaning of school

violence. Furlong et al. (2000) found that a large majority of definitions about school violence were centered on extreme school violence, otherwise known as tragic school shootings. Simply categorizing school violence as a safety issue does not fully address the situation and all but eliminates or diminishes the role of the school psychologist. According to Furlong et al. (2000), school safety should be managed as efficiently and diligently as academic performance. Poverty within inner-city residences, enrollment in middle school, and junior high school were places where violence was more prevalent.

According to Johnson (1999), schools were threatened daily by the insertion of violence, drugs, alcohol, and gang-related activities. These factors played a critical role in the ability or inability of the school administrator to create a safe environment for staff and students in K-12 and post-secondary institutions. Johnson indicated that adolescents are becoming increasingly more exposed to acts of school violence than were their parents. The general landscape and makeup of modern schools did not resemble that of schools of previous decades. The utilization of the school resource officer has provided schools with some sense of safety but does not completely eradicate the underlying issue of school violence. According to research conducted by Johnson (1999), school resource officers have had a positive impact on curving disciplinary infractions and acts of violence within school systems. Johnson's research concluded that the total number of disciplinary infractions within high schools and middle schools in Alabama decreased by 557 incidences from 3,264 in 1994-1995, with no presence of school resource officers, to 2710 in the following year of 1995-1996, when school resource officers were permanently assigned to schools.

School shootings have become a commonality in American society and American educational institutions through the second half of the 20th century. An in-depth analysis of

recorded incidents of school shootings that resulted in death produced astonishing numbers. According to the Center for Homeland Security and Defense (2020), the school years spanning from 2010 through 2019 proved to be the deadliest school years on record. During those years, there were 227 documented deaths among educational institutions. That was an average of 25.2 deaths per year among school-aged students with a firearm. The year 2018 was the deadliest year on record according to the Center for Homeland Defense Security (2020), with 63 adolescent lives claimed by gun violence in educational institutions. By volume, the next closest ten-year span was that of the 90s.

During the years from 1990-1999, the death toll among school-aged students who were killed by gun violence rose by 117 deaths from the previous decade to 218. This increase equated to a 9.75 average death per month increase. From the beginning of 1970 to the last day of 2019, there were 762 documented deaths from school shooters in American Schools (Center for Homeland Defense Security, 2019). The Center for Homeland Defense Security (2019) indicated that there have been over 1300 documented school shooting incidences. For an incident to be categorized as a school shooting, a gun must be brandished, fired, or a bullet must hit school property.

Predicting school shootings or incidences of violence has proven to be an unobtainable feat. The Center for Homeland Defense Security (2019) analysis of school shootings from 1970-2019 showed that an overwhelming majority of incidences of school shootings occurred during morning classes in K-12 educational institutions. The analysis of school shootings to identify the time of day in which a targeted violence incidence is likely to take place, has transformed the significance of morning duty schedules for teachers and staff, morning transitions for students, and the adoption and modification of school board policies to promote school safety (Center for

Homeland Security, 2019).   The breakdown of time of incidences can be found in the following

table.

Table 2.

Occurrences According to Time of Day

Time of the Day	Number of Occurrences
Morning Classes	286
Evening Classes	159
Afternoon Classes	140
Lunch	113
After School	110
Dismissal	102
As school begins	75
Before School	72
Not a School Day	64
Night	50

A study conducted by Morrow, Vickovic, Dario, and Fradella (2016) concluded that

approximately 6.1 million United States residents aged 12 and older have had an experience of

violent victimization. Morrow et al. suggested that approximately 2.4% of individuals over the

age of 11 years old have been affected by some form of violence. Morrow et al. indicated that

after the horrific tragedy at Columbine high school, the public began to have a fear for school

safety regarding violence, and this became a central point of conversation. Intensity and severity

of school shootings, though rare, have a dramatic prevalence on communities and schools across

the United States (Morrow et al., 2016).   Morrow et al. stated that targeted events resulting in

school shootings accounted for less than 2% of the annual homicides of youth aged five to

eighteen.

Despite accounting for less than two percent of homicide deaths among students aged

five to eighteen, school shootings have received an immense amount of attention from media

outlet sources and have garnished the nation's attention (Morrow et al., 2016). The strong presence of the media has caused the public to become fearful for the lives of students and teachers at local schools everywhere. Forty-four percent of surveyed students indicated the Columbine High School shooting impacted the perception of school safety. Twenty-seven percent of individuals, parents, and community members indicated that Columbine High school had "some" effect on the perception of school safety.

Of these effects, judges were put into a position to make decisions that could cause social and political upheaval when dealing with violent crimes in schools (Morrow et al., 2016). According to Morrow et al. (2016), following the Columbine High School shooting, individuals in Boulder County, Colorado began to see an increase in the amount of violent crime offenders that were detained and the reluctance of bond commissioners to facilitate the release of these individuals. The study conducted by Morrow et al. concluded that following tragic events, judgments handed down by judges shifted to punish offenders more severely following the Columbine High School shooting.

Targeted violence is defined as violence in which the attacker selects a target prior to committing the act (Reddy et al., 2001). Targeted violence does not limit itself to just shootings or individuals. At times, targeted violence can be geared towards buildings and places. Most school shootings are not random and have an identifiable target. Though an identifiable target and opportunity have been presented, at times, the targeted violence does more damage and has more collateral damage than the attacker configured prior to the action.

Morrow et al. (2016) indicated that the media's misrepresentation of targeted school violence was over representative and promoted fear and panic among the public. The study

suggested that the media portrays targeted school violence as a regularly occurring incident when in fact targeted school violence is rare. Research concluded that it is easy to see that media significantly influences public sentiment when pertaining to crime related topics. Media not only controls what the general public deems important, but also controls the level of fear placed upon everything reported. According to Morrow et al., media can incite the fear of a situation by involving pictures and images of the incident.   This is a tactic that can be used to infuse more panic than the actual risk that each event poses.

Gun Control

After each mass shooting in American society, there has been a strenuous analysis and call for change to the current gun control and regulation laws in the state in which the shootings occurred. The politicians and lawmakers who field these conversations were bombarded with questions regarding the sale of assault rifles, regardless of age, and the damage in which they inflict. This has been a continuous topic as the assault rifle, particularly the AR-15, has been utilized to inflict much damage in a short period of time (Mawson, Lapsley, Hoffman, & Guignard, 2002).

Anderson and Sabia (2016) conducted research that indicated that there was little known about the effects of gun control policies on youth gun laws and school violence. Statistics indicated that there was an increasing number of children, under the age of 18, in homes with unrestricted access to firearms. Another 43% of surveyed children reported that there was at least one gun in an unlocked place within the home, with 1.7 million children living in homes with unlocked and loaded weapons. While 50% of students in inner-city schools indicated that they had taken a gun to school before (Mawson et al., 2002). Mawson et al. also concluded that

75% of students in inner-city schools knew someone who had been shot and another 50% of

students recommended that metal detectors be installed at every entry.

As the 21ˢᵗ century has progressed, it has been evident that there has been notoriety, or a

sense of validity, given to school shooters and violence. Incidences of school shootings have

been highly publicized by different media outlets, which has sparked the movement to increase

awareness of firearm access among youth. Interestingly, Anderson and Sabia (2016) concluded

that mental health, the lack of parental involvement, substance use, and poor academic

performance are strong indicators of the risk factors of youth offenders and gun possession. The

above-mentioned risk factors had been coincidentally connected to adverse childhood

experiences, and the correlation between the two was undeniable.

Another aspect of teen gun usage and possession has been socialization. Teens had been

likely socialized into guns and weapons in two different ways, either by usage in sport or hunting

or by the influence of peers. Children who had associated with adults who hunt or use guns for

sports were unlikely to utilize that firearm in criminal activity. On the other hand, teens who had

been introduced to guns by their peers or purchase guns illegally were more likely to be

criminally active and were more likely to bring that firearm to an educational institution

(Anderson & Sabia, 2016).

Gun-related school violence and fatal shootings had implications on the success of the

remaining students and staff members after the mayhem. According to Anderson and Sabia

(2016), high schools that had been the unfortunate host to fatal school shootings had seen a

decreased rating in test scores, a decrease in remaining enrollment, and an increase in high

school dropout rates following the crisis event. Further analysis suggested that during situations

that involved fatal shootings in public schools, the enrollment of private schools tended to see an

increase. Though the school, administrators, teachers, and staff work diligently to ensure the safety of the school, results from research stated that school safety had been a major contributor to the hindrance of academic performance, classroom engagement, test scores, absenteeism, and dropout rates. A deeper analysis concluded that students who feared that their classmates would bring weapons to school, would in turn, bring weapons to school (Anderson & Sabia, 2016). The United States of America stands divided on the federal level when dealing with child access to firearms and correlating laws. The federal government had not made an official law to address access to firearms by children, but state-level governments had created and imposed a fine or imprisonment (Anderson & Sabia, 2016).

Senate Bill 1: School Safety and Resiliency Act

Kentucky parents, teachers, and community members began to voice their opinions about the safety of their students more forcefully following the mass shooting and death of two Marshall County High School students in Kentucky. Comments regarding school violence targeted mental health issues and violence prevention strategies. The Marshall County shootings solidified the need for school safety discussion and action among Kentucky lawmakers. These collective conversations sparked lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 1. Senate Bill 1 emphasized screening that was utilized to identify at-risk students through a threat assessment protocol (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2019). At-risk individuals identified within this group would display emotional disabilities and antisocial behavior. This protocol required professionals to provide direct instruction in social interactions, problem-solving skills, and conflict resolution. Senate Bill 1 also worked to restructure the schools' processes and procedures related to school security and safety (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2019).

Statistics within mass shootings indicated that no person(s) had been shot or killed behind a locked door. As a result, lawmakers in Kentucky required that all classroom doors, including the gym and cafeteria, have locked doors during all instructional times throughout the school day. Senate Bill 1 reasoned that if students were behind a locked door during an act of violence, the probability of survival was exponentially higher than if the door was open and unlocked (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2019). This initiative was designed to keep intruders or individuals who were looking to cause harm away from the students and teachers that were behind those locked doors. Every minute within every crisis was critical to the lives of everyone involved.

Senate Bill 1 also saw the introduction and modification of mandates to public education institutions across the state of Kentucky (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2019). Embedded within these changes were the mandates for suicide training and suicide prevention among school employees. Senate Bill 1 required that all teachers and staff members complete a suicide prevention training course annually. This initiative was also accompanied by the creation of the state appointed position of State School Security Marshal. The school marshal was a critical component in the collaboration of state officials and local officials to create a safe learning environment. Among many other jobs, the marshal was responsible for developing and implementing pieces of training that were reasonable, monitoring and creating school safety and security initiatives, and administering the school security risk assessment tool (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2018). This tool was used to ensure that schools across the state of Kentucky were following the School Safety and Resiliency Act outlined standards.

Another change that was prompted by the creation of the School Safety and Resiliency Act was the reclassification of the school resource officer. Through this reimagining of school

resource officers, the goal of Senate Bill 1 was to incorporate more, highly trained school resource officers within each school district around Kentucky as funding allowed. The tragedy that took place at Parkland High School on February 14, 2018, claimed the lives of 17 individuals. The school's resource office, Scot Peterson, was charged with neglect of a child and culpable negligence and perjury (Honan, 2019). Surveillance video from the school showed that Peterson retreated to a safe area and did not enter the building where the gunman was firing shots at students. Reports further concluded that Peterson remained outside of the building for 27 minutes and did not respond to the crisis, claiming that he did not hear the gunshots (Honan, 2019). Peterson's actions during the mass shooting at Parkland High School assisted with the reclassification of the definition of a school resource officer in Kentucky Senate Bill 1. Senate Bill 1 indicated that the school resource officers would assist with overseeing school security risk assessments, increase building security among schools, and attend specialized training. School districts were required to ensure compliance with utilizing and implementing the risk assessment tool to assist in the identification of threats, vulnerabilities, and appropriate safety protocols within the schools. The risk assessment was accompanied by a site visit and approved by the board of directors of The Center for School Safety. These were all efforts that were intended to increase the awareness of district employees to safety and security protocols. Reflection upon the safety procedures allowed school officials to analyze and make the needed changes to sufficiently care for the students and staff.

Further analysis of Senate Bill 1 showed the creation of a bipartisan group, who solely focused on improving school safety (Kentucky Legislative Commission, 2019). A bipartisan group serves a collective group of individuals who agree or cooperate from two opposing political parties that oppose and disagree with each other's policies. To provide the best

assistance, the bipartisan group traveled the state of Kentucky conducting observations and interviews of teachers, parents, law enforcement agencies, and mental health professionals to gather the insight of all stakeholders to create a well-rounded plan.

Mental Health

Mental health issues have begun to come to light in American schools, but it was a concept that has been around for many years and has quietly assisted in reshaping the structure and stability of education institutions across the nation. When considering mental health issues and teen violence, there was a volatile combination among adolescents in America. Green et al. (2014) concluded that there were primarily four forms of violence exposure that students can be exposed to which include peer, family, sexual, and witness. Evidence consistently indicates that adolescents that were exposed to acts of violence were more likely to have developmental disorders in their lives than their same-aged peers who were not exposed to the violence incidents (Green et al., 2014). Though studies have concluded that there was a correlation between exposure to violence and mental health disorders, there had been no relevant studies supporting whether students who have experienced violence will seek out the help of mental health professionals (Green et al., 2014).

Mental health professionals were individuals who work solely for the client who was under their care. They work to provide individualized services to improve the wellbeing of the individual's mental health or treat diagnosed mental disorders. Green et al. (2014) stated that family violence, or violence within a domestic setting was said to be strongly associated with the development and growth of psychological disorders as compared to other forms of violence exposure. This could provide a systematic approach to institutional leadership by providing leaders with guidelines and procedures to assist those students with receiving the appropriate

treatment and assistance from certified mental health professionals. Family violence was one of

the most difficult forms of violence exposure as stated by Green et al. (2014) This form of

violence was difficult to detect because it was easily concealed from anyone out of the dwelling.

Peer aggression or bullying can be identified by teachers, classified staff members, and

administrative leaders alike.

Trauma-Informed Schools

Another underlying issue with school violence and its effect on student academic and

social achievement were serious discipline issues and the approach utilized by teachers or

administrators. The issue with discipline and the inconsistent way it as handled ultimately

formed the concept of a trauma-informed school. This way of thinking served as the safety net,

or buffer zone, to the serious disciplinary events that took place. Trauma-informed schools look

at the traditional approach to addressing the issue of adverse childhood experiences, otherwise

known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Leitch, 2017). ACE's are described as

potentially traumatic events that are experienced by adolescents aged zero to seventeen years old

(Leitch, 2017). Events that are considered traumatic and that fall into the category of an ACE

would include witness or victim to violence, abuse (verbal, physical, or sexual), neglect,

substance abuse, incarcerated family member, divorce, and having a member of the child's

family attempt or commit suicide. The interesting aspect of the study of ACEs is the link

between Adverse Childhood Experiences and the quality of life of those that experience them as

they get older. Things that have been linked to exposure to ACEs are behavior that jeopardized

the health, health conditions that were considered chronic, low life potential, and early death

(Leitch, 2017). The introduction of the ACE method of thinking encouraged service providers to

seek to understand the impact of the traumatic events that the student or client has experienced in

their lives. Leitch (2017) indicated that the use of trauma-informed care provided educators with a different sense of thinking and assisted in categorizing problematic behaviors displayed by students as a normal reaction. These abnormal situations can range from small experiences to events that may be considered major incidents.

Child abuse is a common occurrence and was found to be present in about one in every seven children. Child abuse and neglect encompassed many kinds of abuse and neglect. Those included physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Emotional abuse and neglect was overlooked when discussing child abuse. Emotional abuse was considered abuse that would potentially harm a child's emotional well-being and can change the child's perception of self-worth (Leitch, 2017). Under the umbrella of emotional abuse were actions including name-calling, rejection, and threatening. Neglect was considered the failure to meet the basic needs of the child, both emotionally and physically.

Unfortunately, children who were identified as low socio-economic were five times higher to experience child abuse than the same aged students with families in higher socio-economic status. This places children in families with low income and poverty behind students of the same age but different identification, emotionally and physically. Research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) concluded that the lifetime economic burden that is associated with child abuse and neglect was approximately $124 billion in 2008. When considering the total cost of the maltreatment of children in America, it rivals the cost of public health problems like stroke and Type 2 diabetes.

The use of ACE was merely a tool that was utilized to identify potential students or individuals who were at risk based on past experiences. The finding of these experiences does not mean that the child will likely experience difficult adulthood outcomes. The ACE's

identified from the childhood of a student allowed administrators and teachers the opportunity to use preventive measures when interacting with the student. The goal of the program was to further protect the child from enduring increased adversity and negative health. Trauma-informed care was a critical component of caring for the mental health and well-being of the student (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The ideology behind trauma-informed care was a newer concept to the American school society and was adopted by all schools or institutions (Leitch, 2017). Schools can play a critical role in the prevention of adverse childhood experiences by utilizing different approaches to educate and assist families. Teachers and educational professionals strengthened preschool enrichment with family engagement, social-emotional learning, and relationship skills programs.

These skills and programs can be taught during and in concurrence with the regular school day and can address issues such as family engagement, social skills for appropriate interaction, and coping skills (Leitch, 2017). To address these adverse experiences, teachers educated children on how to become more effective adults and utilize the skills that were taught to prevent future children from being subjected to those traumatic events between the ages of zero to seventeen years. This generational change had positive implications on the reduction of school violence and mass shootings. Children needed to be taught that there was no place for violence or abuse in society, but especially not in the appropriate educational institution for the student. It was critical to understand that the findings from the data collected through the trauma-informed care study places emphasis on the negative events with the early years for an individual.

Leitch (2017) indicated that the study showed a direct relationship between a high number of negative events in childhood and a higher likelihood of incidences such as depression,

drugs, alcohol, pulmonary disease, and teen pregnancy. A startling conclusion from Leitch's report states that adults with the highest level of adverse childhood events had a life expectancy that was 20 years less than a student with minimal events. Professionals from different organizations and institutions must come together to find the root cause of school violence to assist with developing a plan to combat the effects of school violence.

Absenteeism

State-level criteria was created to provide a threshold for unexcused absences that are allowed before a student is considered truant. Truancy was prevalent within the K-12 educational institutions. According to Nolan, Cole, Wroughton, Clayton-Code, and Riffe (2013), students who were identified as truant were more likely to participate in criminal activity later in life. Nolan et al. concluded that other contributing factors, such as special education, age, and transferring schools, also assist with increasing the occurrence of truancy among American students. Other issues associated with truancy include occurrences of later incidences of violence, job problems, and incarceration (Nolan et al., 2013). The Kentucky Department of Education (2020) indicated that a child who has reached the age of six years old but has not reached the eighteenth birthday, and had been absent or tardy for three or more days without the presence of a valid excuse, was considered to be truant.

The United States Department of Education (2020) identified poverty, health challenges, community violence, and difficult family circumstances as components in the tremendous amount of adversity that American students face today. Furthermore, students who face this adversity were less likely to take advantage of the opportunity to attend school and learn. The United States Department of Education categorizes an individual who missed at least 15 days of school during an academic year as chronically absent. Chronic absenteeism placed these

students at serious risk of falling behind in grades and not completing required materials (Ready, 2010). After years of allowing the chronic absenteeism numbers to grow across the nation, under the Every Student Succeeds Act, many states are beginning to report, track, and analyze chronic absenteeism data. (United States Department of Education, 2020). According to the United States Department of Education (2020) states who were adopting this new policy were searching for ways to magnify their efforts to eliminate chronic absenteeism, allowing for students to have a greater chance at academic success. A comprehensive report of the collected chronic absenteeism data from public schools in America indicated that 16% of the total K-12 student population, which is over seven million students, accumulated 15 or more days of absence in the school year 2015-2016 (United States Department of Education, 2020). Collected data indicated that the rate in which students began to experience chronic absenteeism was highly dependent upon their race and ethnic background.

Chronic absenteeism was a primary cause of low academic performance and achievement among K-12 students across the United States (United States Department of Education, 2020). The analysis of absenteeism data in comparison to academic achievement served as a powerful predictor to identify individual students who may be at risk for dropping out of high school. When considering the long-term effects of chronic absenteeism, career outlook and postsecondary education are two things that require consideration. A study conducted by The Kentucky Department of Education (2016) concluded that students who have accumulated enough absences to be labeled as chronic absenteeism between eighth and twelfth grade were seven times more likely to drop out than students who were not chronically absent from school.

The number of students attending public school settings that became chronically absent has risen at a rate that encompasses roughly one in every five students (United States Department

of Education, 2020). Chronic absenteeism is prevalent in all grade levels. Recent data indicated that 14% of elementary and middle school students have accumulated more than 15 absences in a given school year. That number increased by 6% among high school students with chronic absenteeism at 20%. Further analysis of chronic absenteeism in United States public schools concluded that female students, attending high school, had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism with a rate of 21.9%. Comparably, 20.4% of male students in high school missed more than 15 days of school. According to the United States department of Education (2020), 27.8% of high school students with disabilities were identified as chronically absent from school. This number grows as the student progresses through school. Beginning in elementary, students with disabilities accounted for 19.8% with middle school rising to 20.5%.

When analyzing race and ethnicity, in comparison to chronic absenteeism, the disparity among disproportionality becomes greater. In a report conducted by the United States Department of Education (2020), the American Indian race accounted for 138,789 students of the total population, with roughly 31% labeled as chronically absent. Over 1.3 million White students fit the criteria for chronic absenteeism, 558,774 African American students, 807,530 Hispanic students, 75,529 Asian students, 16.161 Pacific Islanders, and 93,126 students associated with two or more races (United States Department of Education, 2020). Though there was a disparity among the percentage of students and the total number of students represented within this study, there was one commonality that continued to manifest. The commonality among the different ethnic and racial subgroups was that regardless of the racial or ethnic group association, each race or ethnicity saw a steady increase in the number of students who were labeled as chronically absent. According to the United States Department of Education (2020), these numbers collectively accounted for 30 % of students across 800 school districts.

Chronic absenteeism has lingering effects on the individuals identified before grade two (United States Department of Education, 2020). Chronic absenteeism among students who were preschool, kindergarten, or first grade may prevent children from reaching early learning milestones. Some of these milestones include the inability to read on grade level by grade three. Further analysis of chronic absenteeism among young adolescent students indicated that students who could not read on grade level before entering grade four, were four times more likely than students who read on grade level to drop out of school. This analysis described the direct correlation between academic success and violence.

Behavior and Academic Success

A recent report documenting violent and serious behavior offenses within K-12 institutions concluded a reported 27,109 documented incidents involving 21,010 students. In the calendar year of 2017-2018, there were a documented 41 events that were classified as a 1st-degree assault that took place within the parameters of a K-12 academic institution. This statistic included 29 male students and 12 female students (Banerjee, Harrell, & Johnson, 2011). First-degree assault is classified as a felony assault with serious bodily injury and the use of a deadly weapon. Other acts of violence and assault accumulated a much higher rate of incidence with 1823 events involving 1630 students. These were startling statistics but provided valuable insight into the immense amount of violence and other major disciplinary infractions that Kentucky students were exposed to daily. This information also aligned with the above-mentioned statistics surrounding truancy and later violence.

Since the beginning of the educational reform act and subsequent changes, teachers and other educational stakeholders have researched new techniques that increased student learning and promoted academic success with the overall goal of helping more student's graduate high

school. However, many educational specialists believed that the answer to combatting problematic behavior and promoting academic success within these students was opening new lines of communication and fostering those relationships with parents (Bowen, Hopson, Rose, & Glennie, 2012) According to Bowen et al. (2012) adverse experiences in middle school influenced the likelihood that a student would drop out of school later in life. Communication continued to be a barrier that was proving to be difficult to overcome. It was a belief shared by Bowen et al. (2012) that if parents were more involved with the daily task of the student within the school, appropriate behavior would be more consistent, and academic success would follow.

Research conducted by Lynch and Simpson (2010) indicated that children learn social skills from adults and other children through interactions and observations. This was important because children experienced their parents and teachers communicate and function positively will likely adopt those character traits and rely on those skills when opportunities arise throughout life.

Banerjee et al. (2011) stated that parental involvement in education was associated with positive gains. Banerjee et al. reviewed racial and ethnic socialization and parental involvement in education as predictors of cognitive ability and achievement in African American students, focusing on the correlation between success among students of different ethnicities and their parental involvement in the education setting. Parental involvement in education has been linked to better grades and school performance (Banerjee et al., 2011). Promoting academic success goes well beyond the instructional strategy or method chosen by the teacher to deliver the curriculum; it included the parental assistance in setting up homework schedules and holding high expectations for academic performance (Browne-Ferrigno, Lawrence, & Hurt, 2008).

Within successful school districts, administrators were encouraged to identify the
students that needed interventions (Browne-Ferrigno et al., 2008). Improvement practices,
according to Browne-Ferrigno et al., included the development of infrastructure at the state and
local levels. The development of infrastructure would work to provide expertise and support for
low performing schools in which they govern. School districts would also be required to develop
system-wide instructional improvement strategies, and the continuous examination and
improvement of accountability systems.

Reading and Math Achievement

The country is beginning to see an influx in the variety of nationalities and ethnicities that
are present within American schools (Guttmannova, 2016). This influx is heavily attributed to
the Latino population, which is considered one of the fast-growing ethnic and immigrant groups
labeled by the United States Census Bureau 2011 (Guttmannova, 2016). Research conducted by
the Guttmannova (2020) concluded that between the fall semesters of 2000 to the fall semester of
2017, the Hispanic population rose at its greatest percent from 16 to 27 percent. Despite the
dramatic spike in the Latino population, according to Guttmannova (2016), approximately 27%
of Latino Americans live below the federal poverty line. This was an 8% increase when
compared to the percentage of the general population living below the poverty line. Living
below the poverty line in the United States is accompanied by socioeconomic challenges and
hardships. A recent study concluded that a higher quality of childcare during infancy and early
ages would promote achievement indirectly through early school readiness skills (Dearing,
McCartney, & Taylor, 2009). Interestingly children who were identified as low income or poor
were twice as likely to lack proficiency in math and reading as their peers who were not labeled
as poor or low income (Dearing et al., 2009).

Socioeconomic determination has been major disadvantage to students and the school's success. Individuals who lived in low-income areas often resided in neighborhoods that were crime-ridden and had very little resources (Guttmannova, 2016). It was also likely that what surrounded neighborhoods of low income and poverty were low-income schools with few resources that were not equipped to address latency deficits that were faced by its students (Guttmannova, 2016). The National Center for Education Statistics (2020) indicated that there were approximately 13.6 million Hispanic American students enrolled in K-12 institutions across the nation of the accumulated 50.7 million students. Guttmannova (2016) further stated that the economic disadvantage of students who participated in K-12 academic institutions had a higher chance of obtaining lower grades and increased the rate of high school dropouts among these students. Dearing et al. (2009) seemingly reiterated this assumption when the conducted research indicated that students who received lower-quality childcare were subject to display lower levels of proficiency and achievement when compared to students who were the recipients of higher-quality childcare. The development of the student during the early years was a contributing factor to reading and mathematics academic proficiency (Dearing et al., 2009).

Socioemotional development was categorized as the individual child's experience, expression, and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others (Guttamannova, 2016). The development of the student's socioemotional trait is critical among all students, regardless of socioeconomic status. The emotional stability, health, and functionality of the student has played a vital role in successful interactions and experiences with students who were well adjusted and successful in school. Guttmannova (2016) indicated that financially disadvantaged students were more susceptible to socioemotional difficulties which could have a direct effect on the student's ability to perform

proficiently in the academic setting. Other predictors of academic achievement were the neighborhoods in which ethnic and low-income students resided. Neighborhood disorganization, crime, and poverty all assisted in decreasing the overall performance of these students (Guttamannova, 2016). When discussing the residential circumstances that could have caused academic hardship for adolescent students, an important factor is the level of education of parental figures within the home. Parental education was one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement among students identified as low income (Guttmannova, 2016).

A recent study conducted by Bailey, Jeong, & Cho (2010) discussed remediation of skills among college students in math and reading. This study concluded that students who were referred to or received remediation for math and reading skills are particularly at risk for not earning college degrees. This research provides valuable insight into an aspect of college that had a profound effect on the academic success that a student is anticipated to achieve in comparison to the remediation of the skill and the intended outcome. Students were subjected to remediation of skills or remediation of courses frequently during the K-12 academic experience, but educational practitioners and policymakers continued to develop and implemented intervention strategies that are geared towards improving the students' chances to be college and career ready upon exiting grade 12 (Bailey et al., 2010). College and Career readiness, as defined by the Kentucky Department of Education (2019) is the level of acceptable preparation that a student needs to succeed in credit-bearing courses while enrolled in college.

According to information collected from the Kentucky Department of Education (2020), of the 65,555 students enrolled into advanced placement courses, 61,550 (93.9%) of students successfully completed these courses. This assisted in the statewide 90.9% graduation rate for Kentucky seniors in 2019. An analysis of the proficiency of Kentucky students during the 2018-

2019 school year indicated that 54.6% of Kentucky students met the standard of proficiency in the area of reading, 48.6% of students were proficient in mathematics, and 46.7% of students were proficient in writing.

Special Education

In modern society, school-aged adolescents have been expected to learn and retain incomparably greater amounts of information and attend formal education institutions. These individuals have been expected to adjust to fast-paced changes more so than any previous times in human history (Geisler-Breinstein, Schmeck, & Hetherington, 1996). Additionally, student bodies all over the world have been much larger and have become very diverse. Such circumstances of contemporary societies have posed challenges for today's educators in terms of creating educational environments fostering and maintaining effective learning strategies as well as levels of motivation through long years of formal education. (Keklik & Erdem-Keklik, 2012). It is extremely important in educational systems that educators meet the challenges of maintaining effective learning strategies and motivating students through varying levels of education (Keklik & Erdem-Keklik, 2012).

Within recent years, education has seen a shift in academic focus to include students with special education classifications in the general education population. With the development of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, legislation has held general education teachers accountable for participating in Individual Education Program meetings, planning, instruction, and evaluation of inclusion students (McDuffie, Landrum, & Gelman, 2008). Due to the increase in numbers regarding students with special education classifications participating in the general education curriculum, educationalists have come together to create an effective tool for educating diverse students in the inclusive classroom.

This tool was known as co-teaching and commonly refers to any physical environment in which a special education teacher and a general education teacher work together to provide instruction to a group of students both with and without disabilities (McDuffie et al., 2008). Co-teaching was an attempt at trying to meet the educational requirements of students with disabilities as well as providing access to the curriculum with intense and individualized instruction in the general education classroom. It was a less fragmented educational setting for students with special education classifications, and it allows for greater instructional intensity and engagement time (McDuffie et al., 2008).

Summary

In summary, public educational institutions suffer tremendously from acts of targeted violence and accumulate irreplaceable damages. Damages associated with absenteeism for K-12 students can include emotional, social, and academic. Each generation of American students have different challenges that they must face and each of these challenges may have adverse effects on the educational experience. The review of school violence has provided insight into the issue of school violence and the effects that these incidents may have. This also serves as a categorical reference for specific acts of targeted violence that has taken place in American schools and its effect of school violence on student academic success and attendance.

Evaluating risk for targeted violence in the school setting has become a necessary approach as recent school shootings have raised safety concerns for the students and staff members (Reddy et al., 2001). The influx of media surrounding incidents of targeted violence has caused communities to place increased pressure on school staff, school administrators, law enforcement professionals, and policymakers to create a safer environment and ultimately to predict and prevent school shootings (Reddy et al., 2001). This was never more evident after the

horrific scenes captured at Columbine High School by local media. Minimizing incidents of

targeted violence has forced those in charge to take measures that are believed to be more

preventative and responsive. School districts and administrators, nationwide, have begun to

increase awareness by utilizing preventative resources such as an additional school resource

officer, security cameras, metal detectors, and the creation of a tactical plan that will outline and

reinforce safety protocols (Reddy et al., 2001). According to the U.S. Secret Service, National

Threat Assessment Center (2019), identifying an attacker and utilizing threat assessment

protocols will assist in reducing the number of targeted violence incidents. Research conducted

by Reddy et al. (2001) indicated that these measures are likely to be unsuccessful as school

shootings and school shootings are highly unpredictable.

The literature review presented and discussed in Chapter II serves to illuminate the

problem surrounding the critical issue of school violence and its effects on attendance and

academic achievement. School violence is a prominent incidence within modern schools and

poses an imminent threat to the structure of schools. According to the United States Department

of Education (2020) approximately 30% of all enrolled high school students in America face the

growing issue of absenteeism. According to the U.S. Secret Service, National Threat

Assessment Center (2019), the composition of a multidisciplinary threat assessment team,

accompanied by appropriate training and tools, is the best action for schools to prevent future

tragic incidents. Societal and environmental change has ushered in a different conceptual view

of education. Largely contributing to this modern framework of public education, is school

violence (U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). The NTAC recently

indicated that nearly every attacker, or person administering the violent act, experienced negative

home life factors. Coincidentally, the United States Department of Education (2020) concluded

that students who have negative factors at home have a higher chance of being chronically absent.

School violence encompasses a large variety of occurrences that include weapons, bullying, gangs, sexual oriented assault and harassment, and mass shootings. Violence does not discriminate and reaches out to each socioeconomic and ethnic group associated. According to the U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center (2019), there is no specific profile of a student attacker, and likewise, there is not a specific profile for an institution that has been targeted.

Chapter III: Methodology

For academic purposes, the 171 Kentucky school districts were utilized but the academic data was collected from only high school students in Grades 11 and 12. The remaining student body was not included for this research, as the state only mandated that grades 11 and 12 participate in the ACT benchmark assessment. Regarding discipline, school violence and attendance, the entire student population of Kentucky's 171 school districts was utilized for analysis. This study was designed to evaluate, record and analyze attendance, graduation rates, and academic performance.

Research Design and Content

The chosen design of this study was a quantitative study format. The quantitative design was more suited for this study considering the larger sample size for potential data. It was used to transform numerical data into usable statistics for further analysis of Kentucky schools. The quantitative design allowed the study to discover the effects of school violence on attendance, school achievement, and graduation. A quantitative approach provided the insight needed to properly address the reality of school violence while providing accurate and appropriate analysis. The test utilized for this information was the *t*-Test of Independent Means. The *t*-Test was appropriate because it was used to determine if a significant difference between the means of two groups was present. This study included database collections and statistics for school district attendance, violence, achievement, and graduation rates.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to analyze school violence in comparison to academic success and absenteeism. The focus was placed on academic success and absenteeism due to research that indicated the impact of chronic absenteeism on graduation, along with the lingering

effects of deficits in academic success (United States Department of Education, 2020). This research was conducted to show school officials and lawmakers the dramatic effects of violence on adolescent children's ability to succeed.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences?

Research Question 2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the math achievement, as indicated by ACT math scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts?

Research Question 3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the reading achievement, as indicated by ACT reading scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts?

Research Question 4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the graduation rate of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to students who attended small incident school districts?

Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. There will be no statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students who attended in academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences.

Hypothesis 2. There will be no statistically significant difference in the math achievement, as indicated by ACT math scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts.

Hypothesis 3. There will be no statistically significant difference in the reading achievement, as indicated by ACT reading scores, of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to those who attended small incident school districts.

Hypothesis 4. There will be no statistically significant difference in the graduation rate of students who attended large incident school districts as compared to students who attended small incident school districts.

Description of Population

An analysis of accumulated attendance data concluded that 656,588 students were enrolled in 171 Kentucky public school districts. Of the recorded number of students, those that identified as white (508,152) accounted for 77.4%, African American (69,510) accounted for 10.6%, Hispanics (42,275) equated to 6.4%, Asian (11,340) 1.7%, Native American/American Indian (819) 0.1%, two or more races (23,712) 3.6%, male students (337,632) 51.4%, and female students (318,956) 48.6%.

Table 3

Student Demographics of Kentucky Students

Student Demographics	
White	508,152 (77.4%)
Black/African American	69,510 (10.6%)
Hispanic	42,275 (6.4%)
Asian	11,340 (7.1%)
Native American	819 (0.1%)
Native Hawaiian	780 (0.1%)
2 or more races	23,712 (3.6%)
Male	337,632 (51.4%)
Female	318,956 (48.6%)

The highest concentration of students fell within the 9th grade level with 53,386 students. The lowest analyzed grade level, in terms of population, was the 12th grade level that registered 44,329. The students situated within the 12th grade level occupied only 6.8% of the total population of Kentucky students. The state of Kentucky had a 91.22% attendance rate with 598,698 of the total 656,588 student memberships in attendance on each given school day. With the consideration of attendance and truancy on a daily average, 57,260 students were absent from Kentucky K-12 institutions. This daily average, with accumulation throughout the school year, was an astronomical total of 9,734,200 student absences. Table 3 displays the population of Kentucky Public Schools.

The Kentucky public education sector comprised 171 districts, 1,478 different schools, and 656,588 students (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020). Of the total number of students, 60.7% (392,419) of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged, leaving the remaining 39.3% (254,347) of the student population identified as non-economically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged students were categorized by the eligibility of the student to qualify for free or reduced-priced meals. Students who qualified for free or reduced-

price lunches, according to household income, were identified as economically disadvantaged (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020).

When looking into the performance of Kentucky students regarding proficient and distinguished state assessment scores for the 2018-2019 school year, of economically disadvantaged students in elementary schools, 45.8% scored proficient or distinguished, 49.9% of middle school students obtained this distinction, and 32.3% of high school students scored at this level. In comparison to students who were identified as non-economically disadvantaged in the area of reading, 69.8% of elementary school students scored proficient or distinguished, 74.7% of middle school students, and 58.7% of high school students. Another highlighted area of performance was mathematics. Economically disadvantaged students who scored proficient or distinguished accounted for 39% of elementary students, 35.6% of middle school students, and 22.5% of high school students. On the same test, students who were identified as non-economically disadvantaged scored significantly higher with 65.4% of elementary students, 63.1% of middle school students, and 50.2% of high school students.

Description of Instruments

Data for this research was collected through the Kentucky Department of Education's School Report Card for the academic year 2018-2019. The Kentucky Department of Education collected the behavioral, disciplinary, and educational performance of each of the 171 school districts located within the state of Kentucky. The School Report Card provided the needed information on student behavior and the percentage of students in the school districts that received disciplinary action due to unacceptable behaviors. The report card provided information regarding school violence, including Assault 1st degree, other assault or violence, weapons, harassment including bullying, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other events resulting in state

resolutions (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019). Any incident of the above-mentioned infractions was documented on the state's collection tool, Infinite Campus, and identified on the School Report Card.

Infinite Campus is a web-based program adopted by Kentucky K-12 academic institutions to assist with the organization and categorizing of student information. This system is known as a student information system and provides users with real-time access to administration, instruction, communication, curriculum, and reporting. Among many things, Infinite Campus was utilized to capture and store a variety of behavioral, attendance, and academic data. After collection of this data, Infinite Campus can be utilized to run reports on specific behaviors, attendance, or infractions. The Infinite Campus portal allows the Kentucky Department of Education to analyze and identify trends and targeted behaviors. Identification of problematic behaviors allows the state to introduce and mandate initiatives that will assist schools and lawmakers when determining appropriate expectations and effective disciplinary actions. Infinite Campus was relevant to this study, as it was part of the collection tool utilized to categorize and organize information.

Another feature of Infinite Campus included the ability to track and monitor each student's daily attendance and record the attendance profile for analysis and identification of truancy. Infinite campus places flags and alerts over students who meet the criteria for truancy to be easily identifiable by school staff for intervention. As mentioned by the United States Department of Education (2020), it was critical to the development of young students. It allows staff members to accurately predict the pattern of absenteeism and address it accordingly.

Data utilized in the analysis of math and reading was collected through a comprehensive report conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education that reported the school districts

average on the ACT test in the area of reading and math. Senate Bill 1 (2017) mandated that high school juniors and seniors in Kentucky participate in the college admissions requirement of taking the standardized test, known as the ACT (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020). The ACT is a standardized test that encompasses the four core academic skills categories that students should acquire during high school. For the purpose of this study, reading and math achievement were the two core academic skills used to determine school district achievement.

The Kentucky Department of Education (2020) selected the ACT standardized test for students in an effort to measure each student's level of college and career readiness in the core academic courses in which they are enrolled. By requiring students to take the ACT at grade 11, the Kentucky Department of Education is afforded the opportunity to review and analyze the expected curriculum and modify it to meet the needs of the state and the students. Considering that the Kentucky Department of Education has mandated that students in grades 11 and 12 take the ACT, the department has allocated funds to cover the cost of the test. This eliminated any inconsistency in the population of students who take the test. There was equitable access for all students as the test was administered to all students regardless of socioeconomic status or race (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020).

Data Security

Data collected was public domain information that was gathered from the Kentucky School Report Card that was found on the Kentucky Department of Education (2020) website. No confidential information was retrieved from the source during this analysis. Data used from this source included school violence reports, attendance rates, average ACT reading and math scores, and graduation rates of Kentucky students during the 2018-2019 academic school year.

The collected artifacts were stored on Google files and a backup of all accumulated data was stored on an external hard drive.

Variables in the Study

The variables in the study included violence, attendance rates, academic success, and graduation rates. Regarding this research, identification of the dependent and independent variables concluded that violence among K-12 students was considered the independent variable. The independent variable was the variable that was believed to affect the dependent variable in the study. The dependent variables included attendance rates, academic success, and graduation rates. The dependent variables were variables that the researcher tested and measured for change. Attendance rates, academic success, and graduation rates were dependent upon the independent variable of violence. The study compared the effects of violence on student academic achievement.

Procedures

Incidences as defined by the Kentucky Department of Education (2020), emphasized assault, alcohol, drugs, harassment, bullying, and weapons. For this reason, these were the categories that would be analyzed during this report to keep the finding valid and in line with what was recognized as violent incidents according to the Kentucky Department of Education (2020) school report card.

The analysis of the accumulated data determined low and high incident schools by taking the statistical data and placing it in numerical order. After placing the collected violence data in numerical order of least occurrences to most, the researcher indicated that any school district above the median number of incidences would be considered high incident, while any score at or below the median number of incidences would be classified as low incident. The percentage that

was used in this research was 10% of students with disciplinary actions. If 10% or less of the

student population had disciplinary actions for unacceptable conduct through the academic

school year, that specific school district was labeled as a small incident school. If the district's

discipline data was 10.1% or higher, that district was labeled a large incident district.

Disciplinary data was collected across all grades of the district.

Academic success was measured utilizing student's current ACT math and reading

proficiency scores for the 2018-2019 school year.   ACT benchmark scores were set by the

Kentucky Education Department and were utilized to identify low and high performing school

districts. ACT benchmark assessment scores were only obtained from Grades 11 and 12.

Benchmarks for the ACT were set by the Kentucky Department of Education. Scores for

Kentucky high schools were found on the Kentucky Department of Education webpage.   The

math benchmark for the ACT was a score of 19. The ACT was scored on a scaled score system

that ranged from one to 36 possible points. School districts that had an average ACT math score

of 19 or above were labeled as high performing in math. Schools that did not, on average, meet

this benchmark set by the Kentucky Department of Education, were categorized as low

performing in math.

Benchmarks for reading set by the Kentucky State Department of Education were set to

20. If a school's average reading score on the ACT met the benchmark of 20, the researcher

considered that school to be high performing in reading. If the benchmark of 20 was not met, the

researcher was categorized the school as low performing.

When determining how to categorize high attendance and low attendance schools, the

researcher compiled a list of the documented attendance rates of Kentucky school districts.

From this list of attendance percentages that accounted for the entire district, the researcher was

able to find the median attendance percentage and label high and low attendance schools based on this finding. Attendance averages that exceeded 94.1% classified an institution as having a high attendance rating, while any attendance average that was identified at 94% or lower was given a low attendance rating.

Graduation rates of school districts were categorized as low performing and high performing, depending upon the correlation to the statistical mean of the graduation rate of schools in Kentucky. Data utilized in the analysis of graduation rates was collected through a comprehensive report conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education, (2020). The state collection tool consisted of data from each school district in Kentucky. Embedded within this data, were the graduation percentages of each school district. School districts that were labeled high performing regarding graduation rates were schools that recorded a graduation rate of 94% or higher. School districts that were labeled as low performing were schools whose graduation rates were below the state statistical mean of 94%.

The participating institutions encompassed many ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and varying levels of academic performance.   The data collected represented the collective school year of 2018-2019. The data collection tool was utilized to organize and categorize the information for further analysis.

Summary

In summary, the research consisted of the use of many different data sources to provide a well-rounded and insightful look into targeted school violence and its effects on academic achievement. Throughout the thorough process, the collected data provided valuable information about the impacts of school violence on student attendance and academic achievement in Kentucky public school institutions. The data that was collected encompasses

the 2018-2019 academic school year and spanned 171 school districts, totaling 1,478 schools.

Schools across the state of Kentucky were categorized based upon the number of incidences of

violence reported to the Kentucky Department of Education. Other relevant data was the

collection of ACT assessment benchmark math and reading scores, along with, attendance and

discipline to be collected from the School Report Card for the state.

The Kentucky School Report Card and Infinite Campus tool, when dealing with

demographics, provided information regarding violence incidents, graduation, and attendance

among Kentucky students.   Student success was measured from ACT math and reading

performance scores, disciplinary data, graduation rates, attendance. The data utilized

encompassed the 2018-2019 school year for students enrolled in Kentucky K-12 academic

institutions.

Volungis and Goldman (2017) theorized that though violence is decreasing in

occurrences throughout adolescent populations, the second leading cause of death among these

adolescents was still associated with violence. This is a resounding statement as it paints a

picture of the youth of society, violence, and the implications of this violence. The quantitative

research method was utilized during this dissertation process to produce a statistical analysis of

violence and its effect on adolescent aged individuals in K-12 institutions. For this research, the

Independent Samples t-Test was used to analyze the acquired data. The Independent Samples t-

Test was best suited for this research because it compared the independent groupings with the

continuous dependent variable. It was used to determine if there was a statistically significant

difference between the multiple groups of data. It was utilized because the research analyzed the

differences among multiple groups of data being attendance, graduation, achievement in math

and reading as measured by standardized test scores, and violence in Kentucky schools during

the school year 2018-2019.

Chapter IV: Results

The primary purpose of this study was to record data on the correlation between incidents of violence, academic achievement, and student attendance. This chapter analyzed the accumulated results from the research to accurately answer the previously mentioned research questions. Chapter 4 included the analysis of data in table format to display the findings. These tables were utilized to illuminate the research and to serve as complementary information for the reader to further analyze the stated results. The determination of each school district was done utilizing the culminating violence incidents that were documented within each school throughout the 2018-2019 academic school year.

This study analyzed the collected data to determine if a correlation existed between student attendance, math and English ACT benchmarks for academic success, and high school graduation rates when compared to incidences of school violence. School violence is a prevalent component in K-12 academic institutions across America. This research investigated the possible adverse effects that violence has on students' educational experiences, such as attendance, school achievement, and graduation rate. An in-depth overview of school safety, education, and mental health awareness was presented to provide background and insight into the research.

This study was comprised of four research questions as related to student access given attendance at high incident or low incident schools. Independent samples t-tests were computed for each research question. Data was inspected for assumptions of independence, normality, and homogeneity. Normal distribution was assumed as the entire data set of Kentucky students during the 2018-2019 academic year was utilized for this research.

Research Question 1

The purpose of the first research question was to determine if a statistically significant difference existed in the attendance rate of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for attendance rates at low incident schools and high incident schools.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Attendance Rates at Low and High Incident Schools

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	N	M	SD
Attendance Rate	Low Incidents	60	94.33	1.10
	High Incidents	108	93.95	1.35

Research question 1 posited the hypothesis that there would be no statistically significant difference in the attendance rate of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Results from the independent samples *t*-Test are indicated in Table 5. Differences in attendance were not significantly different from Kentucky students who attended high incident schools and Kentucky students who attended low incident schools, $t(166) = 1.89$, $p > .05$; as such, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5

Independent Samples t-test for Attendance Rate at Low and High Incident Schools

Factor	t	df	*P*
Attendance Rate	1.89	166	.06

Research Question 2

The purpose of the second research question was to determine if a significant difference existed in the ACT math performance scores of high incident school districts in comparison to institutions with fewer incidences. Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations for ACT math performance scores of low incident school districts and high incident districts.

Table 6

ACT Math Performance in Low and High Incidence School Districts

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	N	M	SD
Math Rate	Low Incidents	58	19.3259	1.39392
	High Incidents	107	19.1748	.14291

Research question 2 posited the hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in ACT math performance scores of students who attended in academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Results from the independent samples *t*-test are indicated in Table 7. Differences in ACT math performance scores were not significantly different from Kentucky students who attended high incident schools and Kentucky students who attended low incident schools, $t(163) = .639$, $p > .05$; as such, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 7

Independent Samples t-Test for ACT Math Performance at Low and High Incident Schools

Factor	t	df	*P*
ACT Math	.639	163	.523

Research Question 3

The purpose of the third research question was to determine if a significant difference existed in the ACT reading performance scores of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Table 8 shows the means and standard deviations for ACT reading scores at low incident schools and high incident schools.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for ACT reading Scores at Low and High Incident Schools

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	N	M	SD
ACT Reading	Low Incidents	58	18.3239	1.21352
	High Incidents	107	18.1607	1.35964

Research question 3 posited the hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in the ACT reading performance scores of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Results from the independent samples *t*-test are indicated in Table 9. Differences in ACT reading performance were not significantly different from Kentucky students who attended high incident schools and Kentucky students who attended low incident schools, t$(163) = .789$, *p* > .05; as such, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 9

Independent *Sample t-test for ACT Reading Performance at Low and High Incident Schools*

Factor	t	df	*P*
ACT Reading	.789	163	.431

Research Question 4

The purpose of the fourth research question was to determine if a significant difference existed in the graduation rate of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Table 10 shows the means and standard deviations for the graduation rates at low incident school districts and high incident school districts.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Graduation Rates at Low and High Incident School Districts

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	N	M	SD
Graduation Rate	Low Incidents	59	94.5576	2.66809
	High Incidents	106	94.0868	3.91352

Research question 4 posited the hypothesis that there will be no statistically significant difference in the graduation rate of students who attended academic institutions with higher incidences of violence as compared to institutions with fewer incidences. Results from the independent samples t-Test are indicated in Table 11. Differences in graduation were not significantly different from Kentucky students who attended high incident schools and Kentucky students who attended low incident schools, $t(163) = .823$, $p > .05$; as such, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 11

Independent Samples t-test for the Graduation Rate at Low and High Incident School Districts

Factor	t	df	*P*
Graduation Rate	.823	163	.412

Summary

There existed no statistically significant difference in academic achievement, attendance rate, or graduation rate of students attending institutions with high incidences of violence as compared to institutions with low incidents of violence. While there was no statistical difference in each research area, statistical means were more positive in the schools with low incidences as compared to high incidences respectively: attendance 94.3, 94.0, math achievement 19.3, 19.1, reading achievement 18.3, 18.1, and graduation rate 94.6, 94.1.

Chapter V: Conclusions

Conclusion and Discussions

Despite the overwhelming and seemingly endless amounts of compounding information on school violence, the data indicated that there was no statistically significant effect on student attendance. Most school districts require school administration to conduct threat assessments and training geared towards preparing students for events of mass violence (U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). The goal of this training is to prepare schools, students, and staff on how to react to a targeted violence situation. The researcher obtained and learned valuable information regarding school violence and the subsequent effect on academic success. Embedded within this information was the demographic breakdown of each K-12 academic institution. The researcher's confidence and competence to assist others increased due to this knowledge.

Additionally, the research presented the researcher with insight into the statistics of school violence to assist school districts with the development and implementation of programs to combat violence among adolescents. The awareness of school violence may allow school officials to make meaningful changes to policies that can assist in the reduction of fear, inherently increasing academic success and improving the educational experience.

Relationship of Conclusions to Research

Although there was no statistically significant difference found in this study, as mentioned by Fitzsimmons (1998), it is important for schools to be consistent on addressing discipline to prevent bullying and targeted behavior. Likewise, there was no statistically significant difference on school violence as it relates to attendance, academic performance, and graduation rates, but a survey conducted by Williams et al. (2018) showed results that indicated

that 24.7% of participants felt unsafe in the school setting. Of the students surveyed 14.4% of

students reflected that they intentionally avoided attending schools. While the current

researcher's study indicated no statistically significant difference, the attendance rate was higher

in schools with lower incidences of violence showing a 94.3% attendance rate, as compared to

93.95%.

Though there were no statistically significant results from the research, chronic

absenteeism is steadily becoming a widespread issue within American K-12 academic

institutions. According to the United States Department of Education (2020), one in every six

students missed three or more total weeks of school in the school. Consistently missing school

translates to students being labeled as chronic absenteeism (Kentucky Department of Education,

2020). Despite the lack of statistically significant data from the research, attendance in schools

is very important. Students who lack appropriate attendance history at an early age, will increase

the likelihood of reading below grade level by the time they reach grade three (United States

Department of Education, 2020).

Limitations

One limitation was related to the inconsistency of district reporting. Every effort was

made to collect data points for each school district but incidences beyond the control of the

researcher did occur in the form of school districts not reporting specific information to the

collection tool that was utilized during the research. It is unknown why some data was omitted

from specific schools.

Another possible limitation of this study was the reporting frequency of the data. The

conducted study was representative of the 2018-2019 academic school year. Comparison of the

data collected to previous and to recent data could further investigate if there is a correlation

between graduation rates and attendance, and ultimately whether violence had an impact on academic success and attendance. Data collected during the years in which schools experienced mass shootings may also be valuable information in determining if violence affects academic success and attendance. An investigation into student enrollment and test scores immediately following a traumatic incident would provide a researcher with needed data, but more investigation and research are needed to prove these results.

Recommendations for Future Research

When considering the limitations of this study, the apparent limitation is that the study was conducted with only the K-12 academic institutions in the state of Kentucky. This study only focused on the academic success of students in grades 11 and 12 because these are the grades that are mandated by the state of Kentucky to take the ACT. Other categories in this study encompassed the entire district student body. A future study could include all students located within the state of Kentucky and utilizing a different data tool to gather information in regard to student academic achievement. This will assist in providing more insight into the effects of school violence on academic success in the areas of reading and math to a wider range of students.

This study encompassed the student body population of the state of Kentucky has a whole. A future study would be to investigate schools based upon the demographics of the particular schools. Further studies could include a more direct investigation such as low violence high schools in the Jefferson County School District as opposed to all school data for the district.

Continued research and investigation into this study is needed to expand the research results across the remaining forty-nine states and the subsequent school districts located within.

Garnishing a nationwide study would enlist the statistics of more rural and urban communities, as well as incorporate more economically disadvantaged communities. School violence is prevalent in schools across the United States and the identification of a larger pool of individuals who were directly associated with incidences of targeted violence may provide a different outlook on school violence and its impact on academic success.

An additional recommendation for future research would be to analyze the previous academic profile of individuals enrolled in schools who were directly associated with incidences of targeted violence. These incidences would include individual student profiles prior to the incident in comparison to the student profiles following the incident. This research will provide insight into the direct effects of targeted violence on student academic success. This research would be meaningful as it would narrow down the sample population to focus on individuals who may have suffered traumatic acts of school violence to determine its impact on academic success.

An additional possibility for further research into this topic would be to analyze the findings from the economically disadvantaged population as compared to the non-economically disadvantaged population. This analysis can be used to determine if socioeconomic factors increase or decrease the rate of academic success when compared with violence. This would be an interesting study as it would provide educational practitioners with the ability to compare academic performance, as well as the security of an urban school to a rural school as determined by the number of incidences reported by the school district. Conducting this research would provide valuable insight into determining if inner city schools, or schools in areas dominated by poverty, provide a less secure setting. After this, the consideration and analysis of the location and its effect on the academic success of the community could be investigated. The investigation

and further research into this topic could increase the awareness of violence and provide school officials with the needed data to make informed decisions regarding school safety.

An extension of this study would be to compare the intensity of the exposure to violence and the effect that it has on an individual's mental health. A comparison of the mental health of students who are present during traumatic events, as measured on a rating scale, could provide further insight into the violence debate and discussion. This investigation could provide K-12 schools, colleges, and universities more information on the psychological needs of the students that are enrolled within the institution. Acquiring a better understanding of the student and the characteristics in which they possess will assist in providing better opportunities for academic and social success.

Elaboration of this study could also include a survey that seeks to investigate the frequency of violent events before the age of eighteen, the severity of incidences, and the correlating response to the event. This recorded information would be able to assist in determining if exposure to violence has a significant impact on social success. This study would provide information regarding the student's exposure to school violence at an earlier age and its effect at a later stage in life. The information found from this study can be utilized to assist mental health professionals, alongside educators and community members, with the rehabilitation of the population of individuals who experienced these traumatic events.

P-20 Implications

This study has implications on P-20 learners as it deals directly with all grades and achievement levels. These learners range from kindergarten to high school seniors and do not deviate based upon race or sex. Embedded within P-20 learning is innovation. Innovation shows competency and mastery of a specific skill or strategy, as well as the willingness of a

leader to branch out of his or her comfort zone and do what is needed to assist with the success

of the institution. It is increasingly important to emphasize the safety of all students, as one day

they will be contributing members to our society. P-20 provides practitioners with the distinct

opportunity to observe the specific situation, roughly from the young adolescent years through

the growth to life-long learners. The term life-long learner is an important term and one that is

used frequently when discussing success and growth. The term means that the learner will

continue to learn throughout the duration of life, through experiences and opportunities. A key

concept and connection between life-long learning and P-20 is that they both encompass

personal development and social training. A working understanding of the function of a

behavior, will assist the educational practitioner with the tools needed for behavior modification.

Violence directly impacts the perceptions of students in K-12 institutions in reference to

safety and performance as these student's progress to college and careers. Educators and policy

makers must create safe learning institutions to promote the success of all students in K-12 and

beyond to the college and career setting. Research focused on mental health issues from

exposure to violence, sample sizes from the nation, and the perception of school safety provide

better insight into the issue of school violence. As statistical information surrounding school

violence and exposure to violence become more accessible, stakeholders in adolescent education

will begin to demand the structural change to the K-12 education institution and the

incorporation of new strategies and policies to address school violence for all students. All

students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, deserve a quality education in a

safe and secure institution.

The safety and security of students in grade K-12 have a dramatic impact on how these

students function in the educational institutional setting. This impact also persists throughout the

life of the student and follows them into adulthood. P-20 learners are life-long learners. Each of the individuals who associates with P-20 learners have an understanding of safety and security. As earlier mentioned, a student must first have the basic needs of food, shelter, and safety before the learning environment is one that is conducive to effective learning. Education professionals want to assist their students with achieving the highest success level possible. Success is a relevant term and can be associated with varying accomplishments and milestones. Creating an environment that will allow a learner to grow, at an early age, will only increase the likelihood of that success. P-20 practitioners, with the immense amount of data surrounding school violence and mass shootings, should be able to create and implement more effective practices to better ensure the safety of the students, staff and communities.

The concept of P-20 begins the formation of successful and effective learning for students at a very young age and carries that perception through college. Conceptual learning allows the user to utilize former experiences to assist in obtaining a better understanding of the specific concept. This conceptual learning is directly associated with positive and negative experiences and can have corresponding outcomes. P-20 seeks to infuse the educational experience with meaningful and effective opportunities for students to assist with the social deficits that may accompany traditional learning. Creating a safe environment will foster this learning concept and allow it to mature and grow.

Summary

In conclusion, the results of this study did not provide Kentucky K-12 institutions with statistically significant results that deal with school violence and academic success that would insist on a change of policy or procedure. It did, however, provide significant information for further research and analysis. Conceptual thinking and learning has roots that tie back to the

beginning of education. Conceptual learning allows the user to utilize former experiences to assist in obtaining a better understanding of the concept at hand. In this particular situation, the concept is violence. School officials must seek to understand the function and triggers of violent targeted behavior to be able to combat this behavior and create a safe learning environment for each.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

IRB

TO: Stephanie Sullivan, COEHS

FROM: Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator

DATE: April 27, 2020

RE: Determination for IRB # 20-224

Project Title: *School Violence and Its Impact on Student Academic Achi evement*

Principal Investigator(s): Stephanie Sullivan

Determination: Individuals not Identifiable - Activity does not involve human subjects as defi ned in 45 CFR 46.102(e) (1)

The Murray State University IRB has reviewed the information you supplied for the project nam ed above. Based on that information, it has been determined that this project does not involve act ivities and/or subjects that would require IRB review and oversight. The IRB will keep your dete rmination form on file for a period of 3 years.

Please note that there may be other Federal, State, or local laws and/or regulations that may app

ly to your project and any changes to the subjects, intent, or methodology of your project could change this determination. You are responsible for informing the IRB of any such changes so t hat an updated determination can be made. If you have any questions or require guidance, plea se contact the IRB Coordinator for assistance.

Thank you for providing information concerning your project.

Appendix B

Violent Infractions for school year 2018-2019							
	Assault 1	Other Violence	Weapons	Harass/Bully	Drugs	Alcohol	Tobacco	Not Reported
White	24	876	290	8,288	1,811	582	5,838	139,902
Black	13	803	81	5,143	734	117	249	92,857
Hispanic	3	66	19	589	161	52	114	13,294
Asian	0	7	3	59	20	6	14	998
Native Alaska/ American Indian	0	0	2	25	4	1	10	349
Native Hawaiian	0	1	3	15	5	1	4	298
2 or more races	1	70	5	757	93	30	120	13,034
Male	29	1,264	339	10,877	2,037	473	5,514	188,151
Female	12	559	64	3,999	791	316	835	72,581
Total Students	38	1,630	390	11,081	2,577	776	4,518	80,487
Total Events	41	1,823	403	14,876	2,828	789	6,349	260,732

Author's Biography

      Kewanis Kennedy received his bachelor's degree in integrated studies with an emphasis in communication from Murray State University, Murray, KY 2011; a master's degree in special education in learning behavior disorder, Murray State University, Murray, KY 2016; a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of the Cumberlands, Williamsburg, KY; an educational specialist degree from the University of the Cumberlands, Williamsburg, KY; and an educational doctoral degree from Murray State University, Murray KY. His current research interests include targeted violence, educational achievement, school violence, and school safety.