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School Truancy: An Old Problem Which Requires New and Innovative Solutions

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ABSTRACT School truancy is a known predictor of learners leaving school prior to graduation. In this study the author explored the phenomenon of school truancy among grade 8 learners in the Metro East Education District of the Western Cape in South Africa. The study aimed to examine the prevalence, nature and extent of school truancy in the specified research cite and to offer guidelines to teachers in dealing with this serious concern. The study used a mixed method approach and is based on focus group interviews with learners, a survey conducted by means of a questionnaire completed by a sample of three hundred learners. Unstructured interviews were conducted with principals of schools included in the study. The findings of the study suggest that school truancy is a fairly common among grade 8 learners in the educational district concerned and appears to be closely associated with a host of interconnected and overlapping negative individual, family and community risks factors. The study concluded that if truant behaviour is not addressed through a collaborative approach taking numerous risk factors into account, it may have potentially disastrous effects not only for learners, but also for their families and communities at large.