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A study of the effect of a homework club on the completion of homework by students with and without learning disabilities

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF A HOMEWORK CLUB ON THE COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK BY STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this experimental multiple baseline study across subjects was to ascertain if a homework club with study skills training would enable students to improve their percentage of homework completion.

The subjects of this study included 16 elementary school students in a suburban, southern New Jersey school district. Twelve third grade and four fourth grade students with and without learning disabilities were included.

All students completed 20 days of intervention by attending a homework club with study skills training. Students self-monitored their percent of homework completed by keeping a weekly graph. These results were checked for accuracy by teachers. Follow up data were collected for eight days after intervention.

Results showed that 13 students increased their homework completion rates, 2 students stayed the same, and only 1 subject had a slight decrease in homework completion. When intervention was completed, follow up data indicated that 9 of 16 students decreased their homework completion rates, 4 students improved their homework completion rates, and 3 stayed the same as intervention.

The majority of parents and students in this study indicated that they would like to see The Homework Club continue in this district in the future.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated with love to the memory of my mother, Alice Naomi Cosenza, who taught me everything that I ever needed to know.

Acknowledgments

I would like to gratefully acknowledge everyone who encouraged, supported, and assisted me with this paper. First, I would like to thank the superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of special services, child study team, principal, administrative personnel, and teachers in my school district. Your trust and kindness was deeply appreciated.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and encouragement. Thank you to my husband, Scott Rolfe, and to my father, Dominic Cosenza, for keeping the family together while I was working on this paper. Thank you to Babs and Meredith for their warmth and friendship. For James and Gina, I hope that this experience has shown you that if you persevere you can achieve your goals.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of providing students with skills, strategies, and a supportive environment to complete homework assignments in an after school homework club setting.

Homework is a task which crosses all cultures, grade levels, ages, and ability levels (Warton, 2001). Homework is defined by Cooper (2001) as "tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school hours" (p. 7). However, there is no universal definition of what tasks homework should entail (Knorr, 1981).

Homework has fallen in and out of popularity during the 20th century in a cyclical fashion, occurring about every 15 years (Cooper, 2001). Research suggests that opinions about the importance of homework are driven by global economic trends, and less on impirical study (Cooper & Valentine, 2001).

In the early 1900's, the goal was to exercise the mind by emphasizing rote memorization (Knorr, 1981). A backlash occurred when there was concern that students were suffering from stress, eyestrain, and were in need of more fresh air (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). By the late 1920's, there was a trend to give homework that was of more interest to the student (Knorr). By the 1940's, homework was minimized because it interfered with family time (Cooper, 2001). In the 1950's, homework was given to teach life skills, such as responsibility and intrinsic motivation (Knorr). After the Russians launched Sputnik, homework increased dramatically, with an emphasis on technology, math, and science (Kralovec & Buell).

By the mid 1960's, mental health concerns were the focus, as it was believed that there was too much pressure being put upon the students to achieve through the use of large amounts of homework (Cooper, 2001). Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's this new emphasis to lessen pressure continued (Knorr, 1981).

In the 1980's there was the slowing of the economy and education was blamed (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). The result was the move to go back to basics, and homework was back in favor (Knorr, 1981). During the 1980's, the state began to mandate higher standards and demand more opportunities for more inclusion of special education students in the regular education classroom (Polloway, Bursuck, & Epstein, 2001).

In the 1990's, even more homework was implemented, as businesses began to increase their hours and there was more push for excellence (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). At present, homework is seen as a way to stretch the school day to meet the high standards and high stakes testing mandated by state and local agencies (Harniss, Epstein, Bursuck, Nelson, & Jayanthi, 2001).

Home and school are the two institutions given the task of socialization and education of the children (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998). Cooper and Valentine (2001) state that after 75 years of homework research, there is no overwhelming body of research that proves that homework is beneficial or not beneficial, and that research is used selectively to self-promote one's opinion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of homework.

Proponents espousing the benefits of homework believe that homework promotes the long term goals of self discipline, problem solving, motivation, and improved study habits in younger children, in addition to improving the knowledge base in older students

(Cooper, 2001). Homework is believed to teach students that learning is life long, and does not just take place inside the school building (Cooper & Valentine, 2001).

Opponents of homework find research on the benefits of homework as being inconsistent and inconclusive (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). More homework doesn't necessarily lead to high achievement or the building of a better character (Corno, 1996). Due in part to short attention spans and lack of study skills, students in elementary school did not achieve more as a result of homework completion (Cooper, 2001). Even with lack of conclusive research to link homework completion and achievement, students are experiencing back pain from carrying heavy loads of books back and forth from home to school (Kralovec & Buell).

Time constraints have also been a problem associated with homework completion (Balli, et al.,1998). Copious amounts of homework interfered with sports and leisure time activities (Warton, 2001). It also took away from time for students to learn about their family values, their culture, and their heritage (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). This denial of time to become more well rounded individuals may result in heightened pressure and academic fatigue (Cooper, 2001).

In addition to lack of time, limited resources are also a problem for many students. Working parents, single parent families, and less access to extended family all impact upon resources available to a student (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). Parents have differing abilities to provide students with time, space, and materials due to socio-economic reasons (Cooper, 2001). These students may lack school supplies, equipment, and supervision (Cooper). Some students must perform chores at home for their working parents, even though they may be judged as having less ability and worth when their

homework is not completed on time (Kralovec & Buell). While students with access to computers could complete their research with ease, disadvantaged students without the availability of a computer could not complete the assignments equitably (Warton, 2001). These students may also have to put more hours in at work to help their families meet everyday needs (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). In addition, parents with fewer resources may have less opportunity to communicate concerns with the teacher due to time, child care concerns, work schedules, language barriers, or lack of transportation (Lott, 2001).

Homework was seen in conflicting ways by both teachers and parents, with no consensus regarding the positive and negative effects (Warton, 2001). Not all teachers approve of giving out homework, but bow to parental pressures to assign homework (Kralovec & Buell, 2000). Parents, special education teachers, and regular education teachers often blamed each other for communication problems associated with homework completion (Munk, Bursuck, Epstein, Jayanthi, Nelson, & Polloway, 2001). In interviews, parents expressed their concerns about wanting to help with homework, but not having the time, energy, and expertise (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995). Parents expressed interest in receiving more direction from teachers to lessen their feelings of ill preparedness (Kay, Fitzgerald, Paradee, & Mellencamp, 1994). Parent attitudes towards homework and their ability to eliminate distracters in the home were seen as critical to the completion of homework (Cooper, Jackson, Nye, & Lindsay, 2001).

There is a paucity of research related to students' perceptions about homework, and students in one study did not rank home-school communication as being especially important (Warton, 2001). It appears that homework doesn't change students' attitudes towards homework, teachers, or subject matter, although rewards could improve

homework completion (Cooper, 2001). There seems to be little intrinsic motivation for students to complete homework (Warton). Students do not always perceive homework as having the same importance as parents or teachers (Warton).

Nicholls, McKenzie, and Shufro (1994) found that special education students tended to perceive homework as being an imposition, and did not engage in personal after school learning projects for their own interests. Students in the resource room setting saw homework as boring, and perceived that parents became angry and helped them less as they approached junior high school (Bryan & Nelson, 1994). Learning more about students' perceptions about homework may provide insights to making it more motivating and fulfilling for students (Warton, 2001).

There does not appear to be any conclusive evidence that homework leads to higher levels of academic achievement, especially in elementary school. Despite lack of research to support such practices, teachers are being pressured to give homework to the point where students and parents are being pushed to the limits of their ability, time, and energy levels in order to complete assignments.

Lack of communication is also a problem associated with homework completion. Differing homework policies from school to school and district to district are also confusing. Parents don't know what teachers want, as this varies from class to class. Teachers have little planning time to communicate with working parents or with other teachers. This lack of communication has resulted in frustration for parents, teachers, and students. This frustration and confusion has resulted in the assignment of blame to the other parties involved. Teachers complain that they have to teach skills such as character education, which used to be the job of the home. Parents complain that they are being

forced to pick up the classroom slack when students are given unfinished classwork for homework.

Furthermore, students are caught in the middle of this home and school tug of war. It is assumed that they have the prerequisite skills of time management, organization, and study skills to complete assignments at home (Bryan & Nelson, 1994).

By middle school, students' basic strategies and approaches to the completion of homework are in place (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995). The objective of this study was to provide students with time management instruction, organizational strategies, and study skills training in order to facilitate improvement in homework completion. To further support their learning, students would be placed in a supportive after school environment called a homework club. This study was designed to answer the following question:

*Will directly teaching study skills and strategies in a supportive after school homework club setting result in increased homework completion?

It is hypothesized that learning strategies to complete homework assignments in a supportive homework club setting would enable students to complete their homework more frequently. Homework was considered to be completed successfully with a minimum of 75% accuracy per assignment.

The reason for this study was to teach prerequisite skills needed for all students to complete homework assignments efficiently, effectively, and as independently as possible. Remediating gaps in strategies associated with successful completion of homework assignments was an area needing more exploration, especially in the elementary school setting.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Homework Completion

Paik, Wang, and Walberg (2002) report that even though the United States of America ranks third in spending per student, they make less progress than students in other countries by first grade. Students in the United States also spend the least amount of time in school, averaging 180 days per year. Students in Europe spend 190 to 210 days, and students in Japan spend an average of 240 days.

Homework is looked at as a way to increase time spent on academics. Unfortunately, the literature regarding homework has been inconsistent and inconclusive. The complexity and variables associated with homework completion may be why it is so difficult to study (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995). Knorr (1981) suggests that there are limitations on research findings because of lack of agreement about what homework is and how homework is given. This places limitations on comparing research findings. Cooper and Valentine (2001) suggest that the individuality of students, and their differing home environments complicate matters, as general findings do not apply to all. Furthermore, design problems occur because it is not ethical to arrange students in classrooms randomly for study.

Much of the research on homework is focused on guidelines and strategies which will lead to effective homework completion. Mims, Harper, Armstrong, and Savage (1991) suggest that homework should be utilized as a means to mastering the stages of learning. These stages include acquisition, proficiency, maintenance, and generalization. The acquisition stage is when modeling occurs. Proficiency involves drill, and the

maintenance stage occurs when review is given. The generalization stage is when the learning is applied in a new situation.

Homework assignments vary according to differing purposes (Salend & Schliff, 1988). When practice is needed, a drill activity can be given. When a student needs to prepare for a future lesson, an assignment requiring the student to find prerequisite information can be given. An extension activity can transfer prior knowledge and encourage abstract thinking. Creative assignments can be given when the student is ready to integrate skills. Cooper (2001) states that a project or creative writing activity can teach the student to utilize the skills learned.

Homework is a way to provide repetition that students with learning disabilities need (Frith, 1991). Other reasons why students with learning disabilities need homework include to increase study skills, increase organizational skills, and to promote parent communication (Warger, 2001). Warger states that modifications in homework assignments may be necessary. Some modifications suggested include more 1:1 assistance, adjusting the assignment length, use of a calculator, or allowing an alternate response, such as using a tape recorder.

Unfortunately, many students, especially those with learning disabilities, continue to have homework difficulties. In 1988, Tanis and Sullivan defined homework problems as "erratic homework completion of assignments and/or inaccuracies on 25% of assignments or more" (as cited in Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998, p.266).

Hughes, Ruhl, Schumaker, and Deshler (2002) report that students with learning disabilities complain that they do not have enough time to record homework assignments and didn't ask questions about their assignments to clarify instructions. Sawyer, Nelson,

Jayanthi, Bursuck, and Epstein (1996) suggest that questions about homework should never be discouraged, and that the teacher should not accuse the student of not paying attention because questioning is vital. Mims et al. (1991) recommend that homework be given at the beginning of class, so that there is ample time to ask questions during the class period.

Salend and Gajria (1995) recommend basic guidelines for improving homework completion rates in students with mild learning disabilities. They recommend that the amounts and types of homework assigned should vary. Assistance with organization is also beneficial. Students with learning disabilities should be motivated by real-life assignments, contracts, positive reinforcement, and written feedback. Peer mediated strategies, such as homework buddies, peer tutoring, and cooperative homework can also boost homework completion rates in students with learning disabilities.

Gajria and Salend (1995) studied 48 students with learning disabilities and 48 students without learning disabilities in grades 6 to 8 in order to compare how each group completed their homework and how they felt about homework completion. A Likert type questionnaire was completed called the Student Survey of Homework Practices. Neither group believed that homework was important. Both groups stated that they forgot assignments, procrastinated, and turned in assignments which were late or incomplete. In addition, students with learning disabilities were found to have poorer practices regarding attention, motivation, and study skills. They took a long time to decide what to do first, and had difficulty pacing themselves.

Rosenberg (1989) found that when homework completion is rewarded by positive consequences, and supported by parents, it is effective. In study one, Rosenberg studied

six elementary students with learning disabilities to see if homework would improve basic multiplication fact acquisition. Direct instruction alone and direct instruction with homework was studied. Two out of six students benefited from homework in this particular study.

In a second study, Rosenberg (1989) examined four elementary students with learning disabilities to improve spelling. Homework was assigned and an oral practice test was given by the parents. Students also had the opportunity to earn token rewards. Both rate of homework completion and percentage correct was over ninety percent.

Students with learning disabilities are not the only students experiencing difficulty with homework completion. A questionnaire was given to 577 parents of elementary school students who were academically talented. The study revealed that gifted students also experienced some homework problems and that assistance from parents plateaus in elementary school and doesn't increase even though students get more homework in the upper grades (Worrell, Gabelko, Roth, & Samuels, 1999). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1995) also found that parent and student approaches to homework were solidified by middle school.

In response to low homework completion, a middle school in Ohio met with students, administrators, and teachers in the beginning of the school year to discuss ingredients necessary for achieving academic success (Glazer & Williams, 2001). They stressed that being prepared, being personally responsible for their own learning, and completing their homework everyday were key elements in order for students to achieve academic success. Roadblocks preventing students from being successful included having nobody to help them, having other things to do, forgetting assignments, having no place to do their

assignments, and needing more encouragement to complete assignments. Other obstacles to homework completion were the differing ways with which teachers in different classes arranged and kept track of homework (Cooper et al., 2001).

Rademacher (2000) suggests that to improve the quality of assignments given and the rate of homework completion, there are three phases: planning, presenting, and evaluating. First, teachers must not just assign traditional worksheets. Second, directions for homework assignments should be clear, and students should be taught how to listen and record assignments. Last, students should be given verbal feedback and be involved in the evaluation process through the use of a rubric.

Salend and Schliff (1989) found that 43% of teachers did not often discuss homework after completion and 42% did not regularly score it or include it as a part of the class grade. To address this concern, Rademacher (2000) suggests a system called PACE, which stands for prompt, arranged neatly, complete, edited. Students are encouraged to mark either a check mark or a zero after each letter in PACE, to reflect whether each goal was achieved. The teacher then gives feedback by completing the same procedure for the assignment. This assures the students that the teacher is monitoring his/her work.

Another suggestion to prevent roadblocks to homework completion include consideration of content (Salend & Schliff 1988). It is important not to include new material when giving homework to students. Clear directions should be given when assigning homework, including presenting the task both orally and visually. Clearly delineating the purpose, exact due date, type of format expected, materials needed, and checking for understanding are essential to avoid roadblocks. Immediate feedback is essential when the assignment is turned in, so that future assignments will reflect

improvement. Conversely, Cooper (2001) suggests that feedback, grading, and comments do not necessarily increase performance.

Long term projects should be segmented into smaller parts, with due dates listed on a monthly calendar for each part (Bakunas & Holley, 2001). These due dates can also be listed on the board as a reminder (Warger, 2001). When giving projects or other assignments, teachers of different classes should try to coordinate due dates so that too much is not given all at once (Patton, Jayanthi, Polloway, 2001).

Families must also share the responsibility of educating children, as teachers cannot do this alone (Balli et al.,1998). Teachers should send notes home early in the school year explaining homework policy, and how parents can assist with homework (Salend & Schliff, 1988). When needed, parents should be supplied with a set of directions to increase the probability of accurate homework completion (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1995). Successful homework completion is enhanced by not adding new material which is unfamiliar to the student (Patton et al., 2001).

Jayanthi, Nelson, Sawyer, Bursuck, and Epstein (1995) state that homework may not be valuable if parents do not convey its value to their child. However, Balli et al. (1998) found that there was no statistically significant higher achievement among groups with varying levels of parental prompts. Seventy-four sixth grade students were randomly assigned to three groups. All groups were given 20 math homework assignments using the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) curriculum. Group One was given no prompts regarding parental involvement. Group Two was given directions on how to involve family members, and Group Three required feedback and a parent signature.

Parents did report that they enjoyed the real world sections of the assignment related to the stock market and with using money.

Regarding the TIPS program, Kralovec and Buell (2000) pointed out that it was a costly program that placed too much demand on parents. Kralovec and Buell further state that these family oriented projects shift accountability away from school and into the home.

Parental support strategies that do appear helpful include having a specific time and place to complete homework assignments. The location must have adequate lighting, noise levels should be low, and necessary supplies should be available. Parents should be available to monitor progress, as needed (Mims et al., 1991).

Eisenberg and Berkowitz (1995) report that parents can help the process of learning by using the Big Six process for problem solving. This involves breaking the complex task of homework completion into task definition, information-seeking strategies, location of sources, use of information, synthesis, and evaluation. Assistance with using technology to effectively use the Big Six process can be initiated by the school media specialist.

Parent teacher communication is vital to the successful completion of homework. A focus group of parents, regular education teachers, and special education teachers of students with mild disabilities in fifth to twelfth grades all expressed feelings of communication failure, which was blamed on the other parties involved (Jayanthi, Nelson, et al., 1995). A survey by Harniss et al. (2001) recommends that parent-teacher conferences be held at night to accommodate working parents.

In a national survey by Epstein, Munk, Bursuck, Polloway, and Jayanthi (1999), findings indicate that teachers need more release time for effective communication and for conferences to take place. Harniss et al. (2001) also found that for special education students especially, one person should coordinate homework and meetings. Patton et al. (2001) suggest that regular communication with parents should be mandated.

Computers can be used to facilitate home and school communication via email (Frith, 1991). In a telephone interview, 13 of 24 parents wanted workshops or homework hotlines to facilitate communication (Balli et al., 1998). Other outside sources of involvement include websites which assist with homework problems (Silvis, 2002). See Appendix A for a partial list of sites which provide such assistance.

In addition to parents and teachers, the support of principals, coaches, and other respected staff members must support the concept that homework is acceptable to students (Frith, 1991). Finally, more focus should be placed on preservice and inservice training for teachers which instruct ways to promote more parental involvement (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Effective homework design, assignment and evaluation procedures should be taught (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). These training sessions should teach strategies which increase the chances of successful homework completion by students (Trammel & Schloss, 1994).

Time, Organization, and Self-Monitoring

How long should homework assignments take? Cooper (2001) recommends the 10 minute rule, which means that first grades should receive 10 minutes of homework, and this should be increased 10 minutes for every grade level. Salend & Schliff (1988) recommend that grades one to three have 15 – 30 minutes per week, and grades past third

should have 30 – 60 minutes per night for two to four nights per weekday. Short, frequent assignments are preferred by Cooper, such as 30 minutes each night instead of longer assignments over three nights.

Especially when special education students are close to being mainstreamed, the amount of homework should be near the level of the general education classroom, and special strategies or tangible rewards should be faded out (Salend & Schliff, 1989). Patton et al. (2001) caution that homework is difficult for students with learning disabilities, and that this negatively impacts upon their family time. Bryan and Nelson (1994) report that homework increases dramatically once special education students enter junior high school.

Two surveys for parents were designed by Harniss et al. (2001) to gather information regarding the amount of homework assigned for students, mean age 10.95, with and without learning disabilities. There was no significant difference in the number of nights that students were assigned homework, although students with learning disabilities had slightly less. There was no significant difference regarding student time spent on the assignments, but parents of students with learning disabilities did report that they assisted their children over 25 minutes longer than parents of children without learning disabilities.

Homework should place emphasis on organization, time management, and student responsibility (Warton, 2001). In order to help students structure their time for assignments and remove a host of excuses for not completing such assignments, teachers can provide students with weekly, bimonthly, or monthly calendars to keep track of assignments (Decker & Spector, 1992).

In a survey, Harniss et al. (2001) found that a homework book was the number one strategy preferred for students with and without learning disabilities. Harniss et al. also found that the use of the homework books also improved communication between teachers and parents. Warger (2001) states that homework books should be checked daily, as parent and teachers can use them for communication. When a group of working class boys was asked to keep a homework diary, more time was spent on homework (Holmes & Croll, 1989). Jayanthi, Sawyer, Nelson, Bursuck, and Epstein (1995) recommend that assignment books be a schoolwide activity.

Warger (2001) suggests that students graph the rate of return and completion of homework. Students self-monitor by coloring a red square on their graph for homework not completed, and a green square for homework completed, or a yellow/red square for late assignments.

Flores, Schloss, & Alper (1995) studied eight adolescents with disabilities enrolled in a special education job skills class. Their ages ranged from 17 to 18 years of age. Students were trained to carry, record, and use the calendar to keep track of their work schedules. The use of the calendar was seen as beneficial to the students studied, as it taught them to become more responsible with time management.

A two year longitudinal study was conducted by Bryan and Sullivan-Burstein (1998) to design an effective program for homework completion intervention for math and spelling. Students were placed into four categories: learning disabled students with problems with homework completion, learning disabled students without problems, average students with homework completion problems, and average students without homework problems. Average students without homework problems completed more

assignments than the other groups. Organization and self management problems were deterring homework completion, so a homework planner was added in year two of the study. A positive effect was seen when students with disabilities and average students with homework problems were given the planner and instructed on its use.

Hughes et al. (2002) agree that students with learning disabilities need to manage their own task completion skills, as many studies are more focused on parent and teacher involvement. Students need to exhibit self-determination by acknowledging personal strengths and weaknesses, and to ask for help accordingly (Patton et al., 2001). The ability to incorporate responsibility, time management, and organizational strategies must be directly taught to the student and can lead to improvements in homework completion (Warton, 2001).

Bakunas and Holley (2001) suggest that there are two categories for teaching organization to students. They are organizing supplies and organizing behavior. Teachers can help students organize their assignments by providing them with folders (Salend & Schliff, 1988). A daily check of all materials should be conducted by the teacher, and this should be done consistently (Decker & Spector, 1992). Monitoring increases accountability and shows students that behavior is valued (Frith, 1991).

While the results of a study by Xu and Corno (2003) of 121 middle school students did not show a relationship between standardized scores and students' self reports about how they manage five features of homework management (environment, managing time, controlling attention, motivation, and interfering emotion), they did find that students benefit when shown how to arrange their environment and how to cope with emotions.

Organization requires self discipline and this skill must be taught to many students with learning disabilities directly (Decker & Spector, 1992). Because of memory, attention, and organizational deficits, short assignments with reinforcement work well (Cooper, 2001).

In order to increase motivation, teachers can improve student self-concept by praise, the use of a homework honor roll, and rewards (Frith, 1991). Parents can reward students with tangible reinforcers, such as pizza, music, or with telephone privileges (Frith). Lens, Simons, and DeWitte (2002) describe a type of extrinsic motivation which is called instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation is learning which takes place that is linked to attainment of a future achievement goal.

Fulk, Brigham, Lohman (1998) studied the motivation of adolescents with learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. Through questionnaires, they found that the students with learning disabilities avoided work and felt more alienated than other students. They were more inclined to believe that the sole purpose of school was to get them jobs that would lead to wealth. Fulk et al. suggest that increasing motivation has to begin early in the elementary school years.

Kachgal, Hansen, and Nutter (2001) had university students complete a rating scale to measure their levels of procrastination on term papers, study for exams, and weekly readings. No significant differences regarding gender, ethic diversity, or grade level were noted, but stress and poor time management, organization, and motivation were noted as common barriers.

Once a target behavior has been identified, students should be taught how to monitor their own progress (Dunlap, Dunlap, Koegel, & Koegel, 1991). Self-monitoring was

found to be effective and also increased the level of independence in students. Common methods for self-monitoring include recording the number of occurrences of target behaviors or monitoring target behaviors at timed intervals. Devices used to implement self-monitoring include wrist counters, notebooks, stickers, checklists, or a wristwatch. Finally, the self-monitoring device should be thinned and faded.

Self-monitoring is an effective and motivating method to keep students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) on target. (Mathes & Bender, 1997). A multiple baseline study with three males on psycho-stimulant medication showed that a self-monitoring tape with recorded tones at varying intervals and a self-monitoring sheet was effective to increase attention to task in a resource setting.

Prater, Joy, Chilman, Temple, and Miller (1991) completed a single-subject study with students with learning disabilities or behavior disorders in junior and senior high school. The study was done in the regular and special education settings. Students were trained to monitor whether they were working or not. The cue was an audio tone, which signaled students to record their behavior. The tone was gradually lengthened and faded. This was also found to be effective.

Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson, and Andrews (1994) used self-management to increase math homework completion and accuracy. Sixteen students were trained in self-management techniques and 37 students were followed who did not participate in the study. Students were trained and placed into cooperative teams, where they rotated between being the coach, the scorekeeper, the pinch hitter, and the manager. The coach reviewed the homework strategies taught and prompted the other students on the team. The scorekeeper counted assignments turned in and graded them. The pinch hitter filled

in when someone was not able to complete their assigned role, and the manager was in charge of the daily team score. The manager was also in charge of reinforcement for goals achieved. Homework completion rates were greater than accuracy results, however, standardized scores and curriculum based assessment scores improved.

Miller, Duffy, and Zane (1993) found that rewards improved accuracy of self-correction when checking math homework. Students were given a day of no homework for every two days that they accurately self-corrected their homework assignments in class. This resulted in improved tests scores and was an effective way to increase time for instruction.

Snyder and Bambara (1997) used self-management in order to teach three adolescent males with learning disabilities how to monitor and complete a classroom survival checklist. This involved arriving on time, bringing necessary supplies and completed homework to class. Teachers rated this strategy as being effective.

Trammel and Schloss (1994) were able to increase homework assignment completion by teaching eight secondary students with learning disabilities, through modeling and guided practice, how to graph the number of homework assignments completed. In order to be graphed, an assignment had to be 70% accurate.

Another way to promote self-awareness is to have students complete a pretest checklist before a new unit is studied. The checklist helps the students discover both their strengths and weaknesses regarding the new subject matter to be learned (Decker & Spector, 1992). Students can also keep track of progress by completing quarterly assessments and meeting with the teacher (Decker & Spector). Grade sheets and end of

course self-evaluations can help foster maturity and diminish blame for grades being placed on others. (Decker & Spector).

Promoting self-awareness at home was studied by Stright, Neitzel, Sears, and Hoke-Sinex (2001). Parents were asked to tape instructions for a drawing and metacognitive content was studied. Ten percent of parents did not include metacognitive information on the tape, 75% spoke too quickly, and 48% did not include statements which were considered to be supportive in nature. One third of the parents studied did not give the directions in steps. Students tended not to ask for instruction, but wanted help instead.

Miller and Kelley (1994) studied four parent/child pairs where the child was experiencing homework difficulties. The students were taught to set goals, break the assignment into smaller parts, and follow contingency contracts. As a result, students were able to determine if they had met the desired goal. Two out of four students increased on task behavior and 3 out of 4 improved accuracy.

Study Skills

While study skills positively related to learning, American students studied less and did significantly less homework than their counterparts in other countries (Paik et al., 1994). Gettinger and Seibert (2002) conclude that study skills are critical for learning to take place, and lack of study skills may be more to blame than lack of ability when a student fails to progress.

Listed as one of the six factors that impede learning, poor study skills are common because little time and emphasis is placed on teaching study skills in the classroom (Vockell, 1993). In fact, study skills have been called the invisible curriculum because students are supposed to know how to study, but they are not actually taught how to study

in a formal classroom setting (Towle, 1982). Bergin (1996) suggests that schools need to instruct in learning strategies which will be both transferable and useful in the students' everyday lives. When studying students with high and low academic performance levels, Gadzella and Williamson (1984) found that study skills and self-concept were important variables for predicting GPA in university students.

There is also a debate to whether study skills can be taught as an embedded part of the regular curriculum or if study skills should be taught in isolation (Getinger & Seibert, 2002). Decker and Spector (1992) believe that study skills would best be taught in the content area classes, and not as an isolated topic of study.

Students should not be given praise and rewards for inferior work (Vockell, 1993). Students need to be active learners by striving to improve their work habits using self-management for their attention, effort, and time (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). Handouts and study guides can actually discourage independent use of study skills (Thomas, 1993). Instead, students should be taught how to personalize study skills and strategies so that they can use them as independently as possible (Gettinger & Seibert).

Winne and Jamieson-Noel (2003) found that when college undergraduate students were given a goal and asked to use a study method which would accomplish the goal, self-reports about how they studied were not accurate when compared to the actual strategy they employed. Hadwin, Winne, Stockley, Nesbit, and Woszczyna (2001) found that college students did vary their study strategies according to the context of the lesson.

Gender also affected perceptions of how to study. Hancock, Stock, Kulhavy, and Swindell (1996) used a questionnaire to study behaviors associated with study skills. These researchers found that fourth grade girls exhibited more interest in deeper thinking,

were more immersed in the text, and were more dedicated than fourth grade boys. By sixth grade, girls were more focused on reviewing for a test, and boys were more involved in processing oral classroom interaction.

The stages of study include processing information, organizing, rehearsing, and recall/application (Clary, 1986). One effective way to study recommended was the SQ3R method, which stands for survey, question, read, review, and recite. This process was used as a part of a study by Beidel, Turner, and Taylor-Ferreira (1999). The goal of this study was to increase achievement and self-concept, while decreasing test anxiety. Students in elementary and middle school participated in a program called Testbusters, which was designed to teach study habits and test taking skills. Students were instructed in the SQ3R strategy for content area instruction. Students were instructed to read and survey the material, looking for bold faced words, italics, headings, subheading, and maps. Based on this survey, they formulated questions pertaining to information found in the survey. These questions were used to focus reading, and were answered in the review portion. Finally, in the recite step, students quizzed themselves on the material. Beidel et al. found that this method increased organization, understanding, and ability to make decisions. The review and recite steps helped students monitor themselves. The 11 week Testbusters program was found to increase academic achievement, and decrease test anxiety in all 8 participants according to the self-report instruments used.

Other strategies recommended to improve study skills in the content area include putting boldface words on flashcards, listing the five most important ideas, and make up a mock test from study notes (Bakunas & Holley, 2001). Decker and Spector (1992) also found flashcards useful, as well as having the students use color cuing to highlight

material. Mnemonics, overlearning, and visualizing are also beneficial (Schumm, 2001). Knowing how to use reference material is also crucial (Salend & Schliff, 1988).

Semantic webs are an effective teaching tool for the organization and integration of ideas for study, test taking, or time management (Hoover & Rabideau, 1995). Semantic maps are ways to organize information graphically by brainstorming information and connecting main ideas with supporting details with arrows or shapes (Irvin & Rose, 1995). While motivating and useful for improving comprehension skills for learners, semantic webs are especially useful for students with learning disabilities, because they help to activate prior knowledge as well as memory (Schewel, 1989). Semantic webs can be used in a whole class setting to share ideas (Hoover & Rabideau).

Notetaking is another important study skill. Modeling is an effective way to teach students how to take notes and giving open notebook tests makes them motivated to take good notes (Bakunas & Holley, 2001). Schumm (2001) identifies three ways to take notes: free form, the Cornell System, and outline form. Schumm explains that free form involves writing one idea per line on the paper. Another type of notetaking strategy is the Cornell System. It consists of dividing the paper vertically using 1/3 on the left for recall, and 2/3 for actual notetaking on the right. Notes are reduced after the lecture by narrowing down to key words on the left column. Key words are then used to recite information contained in the covered notes. Reflection occurs when a bit of time has passed to digest the information, and students think about what they have learned. Review is scheduled on a calendar so that it occurs regularly. The last type of notetaking that Schumm discusses is the traditional formal and informal outline. Similarly, Kras,

Strand, Abendroth-Smith, and Mathesius (1999) describe how to divide the paper vertically and use the left side of the paper for questions about the notes.

The two functions of notetaking are encoding, the writing of the notes, and external storage, which is the rereading of the notes (Kiewra, DuBois, Christian, McShane, Meyerhoffer, & Roskelley, 1991). Ninety-six undergraduates participated in a study which divided them into three groups: the encoding group, the encoding with storage group, or the external storage group. The encoding and encoding with storage groups were asked to take notes from a videotaped lecture. The encoding group just wrote their notes. The encoding with storage group wrote and read their notes. The external storage group did not write notes at all, but were able to read a set of notes taken by someone else. The encoding with storage group had more recall, due to the fact that they were able to review the notes the second time without the demands of writing.

Kiewra et al. found the matrix framework for notetaking, where the information was divided on the page with the subtopics organized in the left margin, to be most effective. Spires and Stone (1989) also found that the split page format of notetaking helps organize main ideas and supporting details to develop a deeper understanding of the material.

Faber, Morris, and Lieberman (2000), found that when the Cornell Method of notetaking was compared using high and low interest material, it was found to be more effective for low interest material. When high interest material was then introduced, there was not much transfer of skills when taught with low interest material.
When graduate students were asked to think out loud into a tape recorder while taking notes on self-selected information, the good notetakers actively interacted with the text by asking questions, and linking it to other ideas (Hidi & Klaiman, 1983). A second

study with adolescents in high school showed that they copied the text word by word, and that there was very little active interaction (Hidi & Klaiman, 1983).

One strategy to improve notetaking is to begin with guided notes. The teacher starts with writing the notes on the board, then leaves out specific information for students to include on their own. This should be signaled by phrases such as, "Don't forget." Missing parts should be reviewed later so students can fill in any missing information that they forgot on the first attempt (Decker, & Spector, 1992).

After School Programs

Home is no longer the only place where homework is taking place (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). Communities are trying to come to the assistance of parents by providing after school homework centers to promote study skills and academic socialization (Corno, 2000). These programs meet the needs of parents who are working, and meet the needs of children by giving them a safe place to complete their ever-growing, complex workload (Cosden et al.). Homework completion in an after school program improves students' confidence levels (Cooper, 2001).

After school programs can take place in the school building, church, synagogue, library, or community agency (Sanacore, 2002). The definition of homework has been adjusted to be done anywhere during nonschool hours, and not necessarily at home (Cosden et al., 2001). One in seven public libraries do have some type of formal assistance after school, but these programs need to have a working relationship with the school about their curriculum in order to be successful (Mediavilla, 2001). Classroom contact sheets should be transported from school to the center by the student to facilitate contact with the teacher (Sanacore). Cosden et al. suggest that these programs can be

utilized by all students, not just lower income or ESL students. Attendance should be variable, with the ability to stay the whole year, or just for a shorter portion of time (Sanacore). Unfortunately, often the students needing academic intervention do not choose to attend the after school homework programs (Glazer & Williams, 2001). Mediavilla (2001) lists the following reasons for after school programs including assisting latchkey children during the most dangerous 3 hours of their day, giving students motivation to complete homework, fulfilling more stringent mandates, and helping those children seen as at-risk. In addition to providing safety and supervision after school, programs enhance a child's cultural or community identity (Cosden et al., 2001).

When starting an after school homework program, several tips are recommended (Mediavilla, 2003). Staff should be highly trained, spacing adequate, reference materials handy, and there should be homework computers for homework only. Diverse resources and reference materials are necessary, including software for special needs children (Sanacore, 2002). MacBeath (1993) states that a successful program results in students being responsible for their own learning. Student rubrics or checklists can be used to promote successful independence (Sanacore).

The need to have learning transfer to the out of school setting was studied by Bergin (1996). Bergin surveyed a racially mixed group of high school students about how they learned out of school. Bergin found low rates of out of school learning strategies in his group of 210 respondents to a questionnaire, and African American students reported that they were less likely to have completed an out of school project. When five types of after school activities were studied, television watching resulted in poorer homework

performance, and activities which fostered a positive school identity improved achievement (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999).

Bergin, Hudson, Chryst, and Resetar (1992) studied the Hilltop Emergent Literacy Project (HELP) designed to assist educationally disadvantaged African American children in an apartment complex community building increase their instructional time in a small group setting. The language arts curriculum was chosen to encourage movement and singing to promote socialization. The center was structured, with opportunities to make choices. The subjects were kindergarten students divided between a control and treatment group. The treatment group outperformed the control group by the spring of the following school year.

Another study using naturalistic inquiry, interviews, and field notes, at the Manchester Youth Development Center identified key components of an effective afterschool program (Beck, 1999). Like the Hilltop Emergent Literacy Project, this culturally sensitive program was a formal academic program which was child centered. A safe environment with warm, caring discipline that separated the child from the behavior made it an inviting place to learn.

MacBeath (1993) describes a before and after school program which offers a formal, supportive study, a level of independence, and an encouraging environment. This safe environment was conducive to academic study, taught positive self- management skills, provided positive development of self-confidence, and improved socialization skills. This program was more appealing than studying in isolation because it offered other people to study with, a set opening and closing time to provide structure, quiet places to study, and a host of available study resources.

Due to low rate of homework completion in their school, the Shaker Heights Middle School provided less formal school-based academic help for an hour after school each day. Students were able to choose which teacher and which subject they wanted to work on according to their need at the time (Glazer & Williams, 2001). A study by Lamminmaki and Ahonen (1997) showed that academic gains, especially in reading, were possible when students were given services outside of school hours to help with homework.

Cross-age peer tutoring, cross-exceptionality, and honor student peer tutoring were found to be effective (Frith, 1991). After school peer tutoring was ranked as extremely important (Bursuck, Harniss, Epstein, Polloway, Jayanthi, & Wissinger, 1999). After school and in school peer tutoring was seen as a way to share common interests and promote social interaction (Frith). Students can be grouped so that students living near each other can work together, or by common interest (Frith).

Homework continues to be a controversial topic in educational research. Empirical evidence fails to link homework completion to academic achievement, especially in the elementary school years. Organization of time and materials continue to be difficult for students, especially for those with learning disabilities. Self-management of homework is a critical component.

In many cases, study skills are not directly taught or sufficiently embedded in the current curriculum, leaving many students deficient in this area. After school programs attempt to remediate deficits, and fill a need in the community. Homework programs can aid students with homework completion, and provide students with socialization. Homework programs which are effective have a formal structure in a warm, caring

environment. Students benefit from a program which connects and promotes cultural or community identity.

Chapter 3 - Methods and Materials

Research Design

This experimental study was conducted using a multiple baseline across subjects. This design was chosen because it is an effective way to track progress attributed to a set intervention using more than one student (Kazdin, 1982).

Subjects

Sixteen elementary students from a suburban public school in southern New Jersey were selected to participate in this study. Over the last decade, district scores on national standardized tests were in the top ten percentile. Given the high standards of the district, teachers were asked to nominate students that they felt would benefit from homework support and study skills training.

There were 12 third grade students and 4 fourth grade students. Eight were female and eight were male. Two were classified as having a specific learning disability (SLD), and three had 504 plans. Mean age was nine, with a range of 8 to 10 years of age. IQ's clustered around the average range.

Inclusion in the study was voluntary, and a parental permission form was obtained for each student. See Appendix B for the parental permission form used. Parents and students were informed that participation could be rescinded at any time during the study.

Table 1

Grade, Gender, and Classification Distribution of Sample Students

Students	Grade	Gender	Classification	Age
Group 1				
Student 1	3	M		8
Student 2	3	M	504	8
Student 3	3	M		9
Student 4	3	M		9
Student 5	3	F		9
Group 2				
Student 6	3	M		9
Student 7	3	F	SLD	9
Student 8	3	M		9
Student 9	3	F		9
Student 10	3	F		9
Group 3				
Student 11	3	F		9
Student 12	3	M	504	9
Student 13	4	F	504	9
Student 14	4	F	504	9
Student 15	4	F		9
Student 16	4	M	SLD	10

Instrumentation

Parents of students involved in the study were asked to complete The Homework Problem Checklist (Anesko, Schoiock, Ramirez, & Levine, 1987). The HPC was found to be a reliable instrument with which to ascertain the frequency and nature of homework problems experienced by elementary school children in grades 2 through 4. The HPC was completed before and after intervention to show sensitive changes attributed to intervention results. The HPC contains 20 statements related to problems associated with homework failure for which the parent must choose one level of frequency for each statement: never (0 points), at times (1 point), often (2 points), or very often (3 points). Points are added up and can result in a score from 0 to 60. A score of zero would indicate no homework problems.

In addition to the HPC, homework completion data were collected and graphed by students. This was accomplished by calculating the total number of assignments completed divided by the total number of assignments. These data were checked for accuracy with teacher communication and an instructional associate, who was trained as an interobserver. Homework was considered to be successfully completed if turned in on time and if the student achieved 75% accuracy or above.

Materials

Materials used included streaming videos entitled *Seven Steps to Good Study Habits, Part I and Part II* (1996). Portions of videos were used during each study skills session using a computer and a television monitor. Part I covers four of the seven steps to promote good study habits. These steps include having a positive attitude, forming a

positive working relationship with the teacher, creating a quiet work place, and using a study schedule effectively.

Part II continues with how to use the SQ3R technique for reading comprehension, how to listen actively, and how to take notes. A teacher's guide and worksheets supplemented the video lessons. These videos were found to have appeal to students in grades four to six, with a combination of cartoon and live footage, and also found to be multicultural, portraying a mix of both male and female students (Mandell, 1996).

Other materials utilized and incorporated into portions of the video lessons were taken from *Starting Early With Study Skills: A Week By Week Guide for Elementary Students* (Irvin & Rose, 1995). *The Study Skills Handbook- Grades 4-8* (Dodge, 1994) was also used in the intervention.

Procedures

Subjects attended an after school homework club, where study skills were introduced. The setting was an average sized classroom in a public elementary school. Since this particular classroom was utilized for small group instruction, subjects were instructed at a kidney shaped table in the front of the room and then sent to complete homework assignments at one of the 12 desks in the classroom.

Baseline

Baseline data were collected for students 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for 8 days. Students 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 continued baseline for 12 days, and baseline continued for students 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 for 16 days. During baseline, students were unaware that the researcher was collecting data regarding their homework completion rates.

After baseline phase for each group ended, subjects attending the homework club were instructed on how to record their percentage of homework completion daily on a chart. This self-monitored homework completion chart was turned in on Friday. Results were checked by the teacher and rechecked by the instructional associate for accuracy.

Intervention

Intervention was conducted for 20 days after baseline. Students were required to graph homework completion rates and were required to attend an after school homework club. Homework Club members also received study skills instruction. The dependent variable was their homework completion rates, and the independent variable was the stated intervention.

Throughout the study, reliability of data collection was monitored by interobserver checks facilitated by communication between the students' teachers and an instructional associate.

To introduce the first mini-study skills lessons, students were asked to participate in an oral discussion about habits and how they were formed, as well as how they were broken. Examples of good and bad habits were discussed. Lessons were divided into four units. Each unit was taught or reviewed for at least one session per week. Modeling of the skill was followed by guided and independent practice.

Unit One objectives included fostering a positive attitude by creating, writing, and practicing positive attitude statements. Forming cooperative relationships with teachers was discussed by listing what the student must bring to the partnership. Finally, students identified a quiet study place in the home by describing and drawing the space.

Unit Two objectives included creating a study schedule. A blank weekly schedule was given to students which divided the days of the week into half hour increments of time. Students blocked out times which they could not complete homework due to school, sleep, or other obligations at home. Students used the remainder of the time available to schedule times when homework in each subject could realistically be completed.

Unit Three objectives included strategies to learn how to read with a system. Students were trained in the SQ3R technique, which stands for survey, question, read, recite, and review. During the survey procedure, students practiced using the headings, subheadings, pictures, charts, and bold-faced words to understand the structure of the text that they would be reading. They practiced writing who, what, when, where, why, and how questions based on their survey. Students then were asked to read to find the answers to their questions. Students recited the answers to their questions out loud, then reviewed from the text and questions.

Unit Four included objectives for listening actively in class and how to take and how to study notes. Students were taught how to leave a left margin when taking notes so that they could go back and summarize information by writing key words or phrases.

After completion of the mini-lesson, lasting from 30 - 45 minutes per week, students had an opportunity to work with their peers in a homework club setting. The teacher was available to assist individuals needing help.

Follow Up

Follow up data were collected by teachers post intervention for eight days. Assignments were considered to be complete if they were turned in on time and were at least 75% accurate.

Data Analysis

The Homework Problem Checklist was used to identify students who would benefit from a homework club and study skills instruction. This checklist was completed by parents pre and post intervention to ascertain if problems associated with homework completion were alleviated or reduced. Scores on the HPC were completed pre and post intervention and were compared by paired sample T-Test to see if the intervention reduced homework problems.

Mean percentage of assignments turned in on time and with at least 75% accuracy was collected during baseline and intervention. These data were graphed to give a visual representation of changes in homework completion.

Chapter 4 – Results

Group One

Data were collected to find out if a homework club and study skills training would enable students in elementary school to improve their homework completion rates. Group One consisted of students one through five. Baseline was collected for eight days. Intervention lasted for 20 days. Follow up data were collected for eight days. See Figure 1 for Group One graphs.

Student One had a mean percentage of 70.88 for homework completion during baseline. During intervention, homework completion increased to 89.6%. Homework completion decreased after intervention to 81.25 %.

The Homework Problem Checklist completed by a parent of Student One yielded a score of 15 (scores could range from 0 to 60, with zero indicating no homework problems, up to a score of 60 indicating serious homework problems) prior to intervention. After intervention, Student One had a decrease in homework problems, as perceived by a parent, to twelve.

Student Two had a mean baseline percentage of homework completion of 60.38. Intervention resulted in an increase in homework completion to 88.35 %. Follow up data showed that Student Two had a mean follow up homework completion rate of 93.75 %. On the Homework Problem Checklist, Student Two had a score of 18 before the intervention. After intervention, Student Two had a score of five.

Student Three had a mean baseline percentage rate of 95.88 for homework completion. Intervention resulted in 99.15 %, while follow up showed homework completion at 100% for the eight days of data collected. On the Homework Problem Checklist, Student Three had a score of 28 prior to intervention. Post Intervention data were not available, as the parent failed to complete the checklist.

Student Four had a mean baseline percentage of 95.88. Homework Club intervention resulted in 99.15 %, and follow up was 100 %. Student Four scored an 18 on the Homework Problem Checklist before intervention, and a score of 19 post intervention.

Student Five had a mean percentage rate of 95.88 during baseline. This increased to 98.75 during intervention, and a decrease during follow up of 87.5 %. On the Homework Problem Checklist completed by a parent, Student Five started with a score of 19, and decreased to a score of 10 post intervention.

Group Two

Group Two consisted of Students Six through Ten. Baseline was collected for 12 days, intervention for 20 days, and follow up for eight days. See Figure 2 for Group Two graphs.

Student Six scored a mean percentage of 100 % for all three phases of the study. On the Homework Problem Checklist, Student Six increased slightly from three to a score of four.

Student Seven scored a mean percentage during baseline of 83.33 %. Intervention resulted in a mean percentage of homework completion of 88.2 %. Follow up data indicated that this student had a follow up mean percentage rate of 100 %. On the

Homework Problem Checklist, Student Seven started out with a 6, but increased to 18 post intervention.

Student Eight had a mean homework completion rate of 100 % for both baseline and intervention. Follow up resulted in a mean score of 91.88 %. Student Eight scored a 17 on the Homework Problem Checklist, but this decreased to five after intervention.

Student Nine had a homework completion rate of 100 % during baseline. This decreased to 98.75 % during intervention. Follow up data showed that this subject scored 93.75 %. The parent rated the student prior to intervention as scoring an 11. This decreased to four post intervention.

Student Ten scored 62.5 % for baseline and 100 % during intervention. Follow up data showed that this student maintained the mean of 100 % during follow up. The student was perceived to score a total of four on the Homework Problem Checklist, but follow up data decreased to a score of two.

Group Three

Group Three consisted of Students Eleven through Sixteen. Baseline were collected for 16 days. Intervention lasted 20 days, and follow up data were collected for eight days. See Figure 3 for Group Three graphs.

Student Eleven scored a mean percentage of 72.94 during baseline. This improved to 95.4 % during intervention. During Follow up data collection, this student had a mean percentage of 68.75. Student Eleven scored a 10 on the pre intervention Homework Problem Checklist, and a slight increase to 12 on the post intervention checklist.

Student Twelve had a mean percentage of 72.44 during baseline. This increased to 90.5 during intervention, and decreased slightly to 89.5 % for follow up. This student

started with a score of 33 on the Homework Problem Checklist, and decreased to 25 on the follow up Homework Problem Checklist.

Student Thirteen had a baseline score of 72.44 %. This increased to 90.5 % during intervention. During follow up data collection, this subject scored 81.25 %. The parent perceived the student as having less problematic homework behaviors, as indicated by a score of 20 pre intervention and a score of 11 post intervention.

Student Fourteen started with a mean percentage rate of 75 %. This increased to 100 % during intervention, and then decreased to 81.25 % during follow up. Student Fourteen scored 28 on the pre intervention Homework Problem Checklist, and six on the post intervention Homework Problem Checklist.

Student Fifteen began baseline with a mean percentage of 92.19. A mean percentage of 100 was reached during intervention and follow up. Homework Problem Checklist results indicated that Student Fifteen increased in homework problem behaviors from 12 to 15.

Student Sixteen achieved a mean percentage of homework completion of 65.63 %. During intervention, the mean percentage of homework completion rose to 86.05 %. When follow up data was collected, the student had a homework completion rate of 68.75 %. Results of the Homework Problem Checklist remained steady at 19.

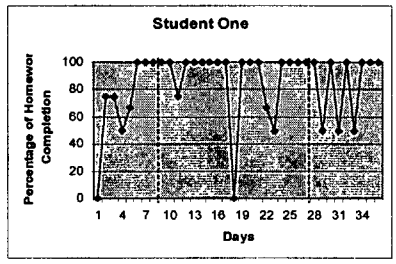
Pre and post test results of the Homework Problem Checklist were analyzed using a paired sample T-test. Results indicated no statistically significant difference ($\underline{P} = .058$).

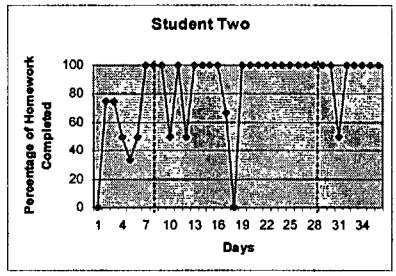
The purpose of this data collection was to ascertain if directly teaching study skills and strategies would result in increased homework completion when delivered in a supportive homework club setting, as was hypothesized prior to the study implementation.

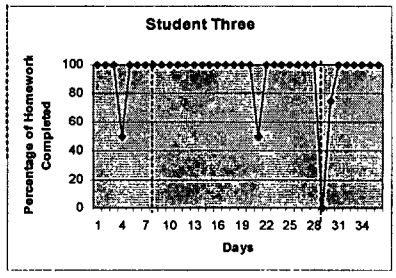
This hypothesis was confirmed due to the fact that 13 out of 16 improved their homework completion rates during intervention. Two subjects stayed the same, and only one subject had a slight decrease in homework completion during intervention.

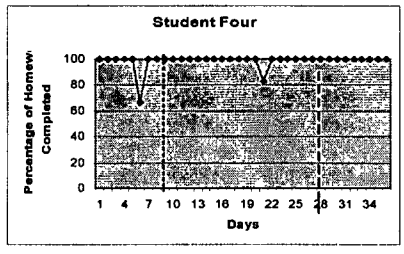
When the intervention was over, 9 out of 16 subjects decreased their homework completion rates when follow up data were collected. Four subjects improved their homework completion rates after intervention, and three subjects stayed the same. As for related homework problem behaviors, 9 students out of the 15 whose parents responded showed a decrease in homework related difficulties, and one student remained the same.

Figure 1 – Group One









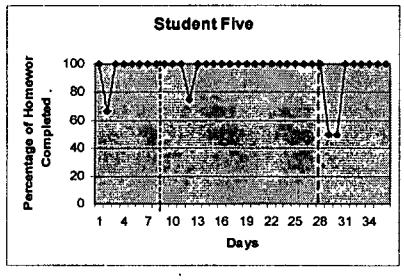
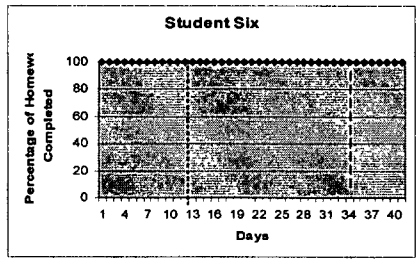
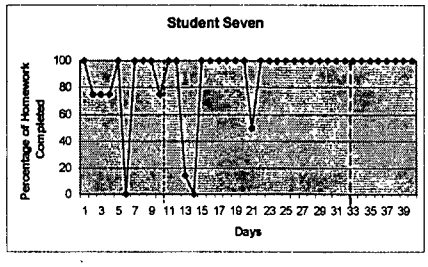
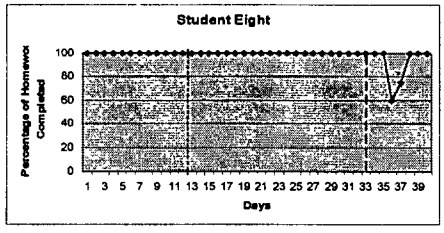
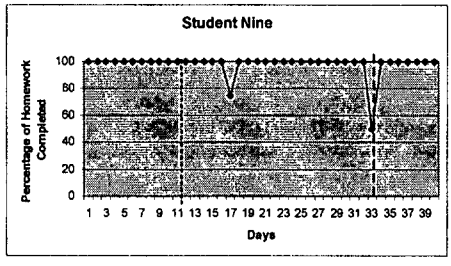


Figure 2 – Group Two









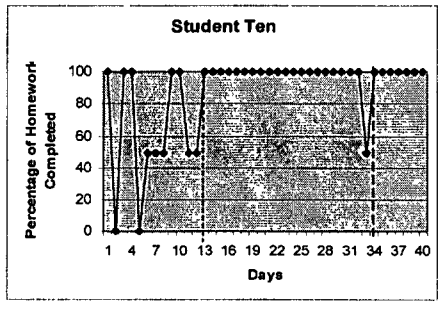
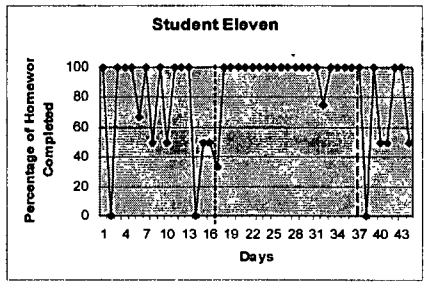
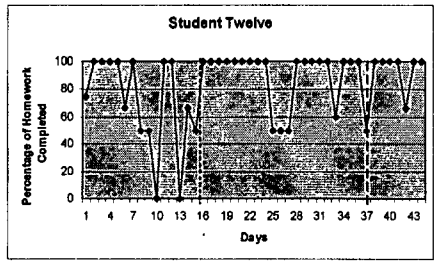
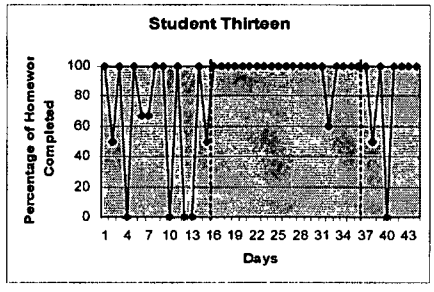
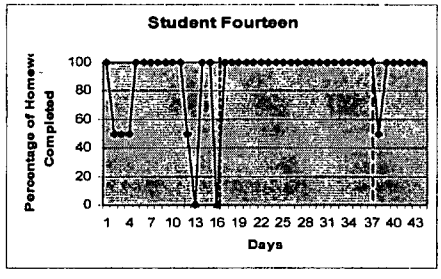


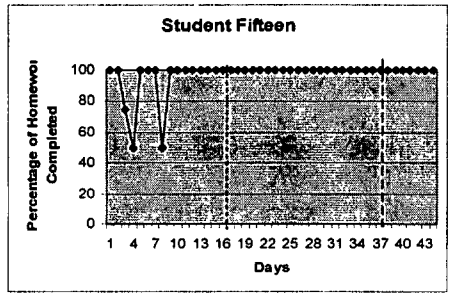
Figure 3 – Group Three











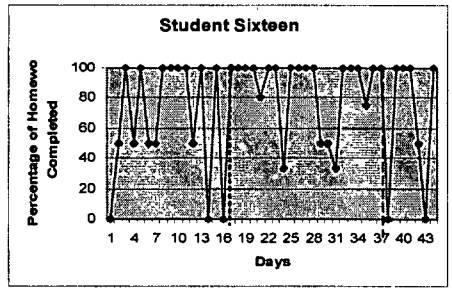


Table 2

Homework Problem Checklist Scores

Student	Before Intervention	After Intervention
1	15	12
2	18	5
3	28	no response
4	18	19
5	19	10
6	3	4
7	6	18
8	17	5
9	11	4
10	4	2
11	10	12
12	33	25
13	20	11
14	28	6
15	12	15
16	19	19

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Discussion

Running an after school homework club was effective, but was not without its trials as well as rewards. Even though students were nominated by their teachers, the researcher wondered if students and parents in this suburban district would have a need for such a program to exist in their district. Most students were already involved in a number of extracurricular activities and were provided with at least minimal resources and assistance to complete assignments at home. The homework club program seemed to be effective because it provided an extra support system for busy, struggling students needing additional academic remediation and structure.

Sanacore (2002) stressed the need for children of busy working parents and children of single parent families in middle school to have a structured environment to complete their homework assignments. While Sanacore's study involved middle school students, it seemed logical that elementary school students also needed the same structure.

Cosden, et al. (2001) suggested that a homework club should not be restricted to those with low socioeconomic levels. Furthermore, according to Cosden, et al., there was a need to provide homework club structure to meet all needs, including academic, socialization, and the provision of leisure time activities.

At the beginning of the homework club, the researcher attempted to provide leisure type activities and games which were academically based, like multiplication and division board games. Computer use was restricted to a few programs which where

geared towards skills acquisition and drill. As time went on, students asked for more freedom regarding their choices of leisure activities after homework was completed. When these guidelines were gently relaxed, it was gratifying to find a group of students helping each other to make Power Point presentations using animation and sound. This was started by a student who had previously been having difficulty socializing, so this was a chance for this student to shine with his peers. Other students naturally gravitated towards helping other students as peer tutors.

Another component of the homework club was the use of self-recording. Trammel and Schloss (1994) studied the effectiveness of self graphing with students in grades 7th through 10th with learning disabilities. This study by Trammel and Schloss showed that self-graphing was effective and that teachers reported that self-graphing helped to improve students' attitudes towards homework completion.

In the current study, students were supposed to turn in their homework charts on Friday of each week. Some of the students routinely forgot to update and or turn in the homework charts on a regular basis. It took a lot of persistence on the researcher's part to collect all data each week.

When Hughes, et al. (2002) taught a homework completion strategy to students, including the use of daily/weekly planners, assignment completion improved; although students still reported problems in starting and finishing their assignments in a timely manner. The study by Hughes, et al. differed from the current study, as homework in their study was completed at home and not in a homework club setting. Given the fact that many of the subjects studied in this researcher's current study routinely forgot materials and had to return to their classrooms multiple times to complete their

assignments, it was fortuitous that the homework club setting was in close proximity to their classrooms. In an attempt to remediate their failure to remember to pack up their book bags with all materials necessary to complete assignments, the researcher found a checklist of materials and books being used by a colleague. The researcher copied and reduced the checklist so that students could glue a tiny checklist on each day of their weekly planner. When an assignment was written in the planner, the student also checked off the books that they needed to take home. This helped some of the students become more organized.

As for study skills lessons, the researcher attempted to keep them short, entertaining, and with a lot of guided practice so that students were comfortable using the new skills taught. As Hughes, et al. (2002) noted, however, skills deficits and motivation may overshadow systematically taught study skills training in some cases.

Homework Club ended with a pizza party and attendance certificates were given out. Generally, students made positive comments about attending the Homework Club. One student stated, "I thought it would be boring, but I had fun." Other students continued to ask when the Homework Club would resume.

Another student wrote a note stating, "I really enjoyed you helping me with questions I didn't know how to do. Thank you for letting me do fun stuff and play games..."

Regarding the Homework Problem Checklists, the researcher expected that homework problem behaviors would either decline or stay the same, when compared before and after intervention. Five students had an increase in perceived negative homework behaviors at home, which could be attributed to more parental awareness of problems impeding their homework completion in the home.

Summary

In summary, homework has come in and out of favor in a cyclical fashion over the years. Opponents of homework complain that it drains on family resources and time. Furthermore, there is no conclusive evidence which links homework achievement and academic gains, especially in lower grades.

In Chapter 2, existing literature was reviewed regarding homework completion, self-monitoring, and study skills. After school programs were thought to be ways to provide academic resources, to teach study skills, and to provide needed socialization opportunities. After school programs which encouraged peer tutoring and promoted a community or cultural identity were seen as being particularly successful.

Sixteen students from a suburban public elementary school in southern New Jersey were nominated by teachers and volunteered to join a homework club to improve their homework completion rates. The mean age of the students was nine years old. Five of the students were classified as having a specific learning disability or had a 504 plan.

In this multiple baseline study across subjects, students were placed into three groups. Group One baseline data were collected for 8 days. Group Two baseline data were collected for 12 days, and Group Three baseline data were collected for 16 days. All groups had an intervention lasting 20 days, with 8 days of follow up. In addition, parents completed a Homework Problem Checklist before and after intervention to monitor behaviors which interfered with homework completion.

Results indicated that out of sixteen subjects, only one student decreased his/her homework completion rates during intervention, indicating that a homework club was effective in the improvement of homework completion rates. Homework Problem

Checklist results indicated that nine students out of fifteen students whose parents responded showed a decrease in problem behaviors and one student stayed the same.

Feedback from the Homework Club parents and students was overwhelmingly positive. There was interest in making this a permanent program in this elementary school in the future.

Implications

Homework Clubs should be available after school free of charge with teachers available to assist with remediating roadblocks to successful homework completion. Many times the student wanted to complete the homework assignment, but didn't know how to complete the given task. Some of the assignments were challenging, even to the researcher, who had access to teachers' manuals.

In addition to positive comments regarding the need for homework club assistance, parents also wrote unsolicited notes to the researcher expressing their strong opinions regarding having this program continue next year. Comments included the following:

"...is more focused on homework and studying and staying on task. ...enjoyed the feeling of coming home without homework left to do and learned that getting it done allowed ... time to go on the computer or read or play outside."

Another parent wrote, "...is much more motivated to do his homework, and more motivated to do it well since starting your homework club...is excited to do homework! ...Sometimes even wanting to start ... homework before homework time...

Another parent wrote, "Wonderful program...attitude has changed somewhat...feels more confident...I would appreciate the opportunity for this program in the future especially at the start of the year..."

"This was a great program. It would be a great thing to start up for the kids. They learn more when they work together. Please think about starting up a program like this for the kids."

"Haven't seen much improvement in habits or attitude! But ...is always better at school, or with a group than by himself at home."

Limitations

Limitations of the study included the length of time, as the study could have been longer. Expanding the study to involve more than 16 students from more than one school in the district would have yielded more information. This particular study was limited, as it took place in one school in southern New Jersey. So far, there has been no way to find out if the students have generalized study skills into their everyday homework habits.

In addition, days off, and standardized testing days may have impacted the homework completion results, as less homework was given than usual during those times. More follow up time was needed. One parent stated that it was difficult to complete the post intervention Homework Problem Checklist because there was not enough time to adequately assess improvement.

Teachers also noted that baseline data were collected right after the end of the second marking period, which is typically the time when students are trying their best to complete assignments, and may not accurately reflect their true level of homework completion for the rest of the school year.

Recommendations for Further Research

In addition to increasing the length of the intervention, the researcher would recommend that there be more adult assistance, possibly one adult for every five students,

and that the homework area be in a separate space than the socialization area, as the noise level sometimes was not conducive to studying. Also, there should be an attempt to incorporate more sense of community through community service projects, art and music. Due to busy schedules, students should be able to drop in and out, depending on their individual needs and outside responsibilities. Parents should also be allowed to become more involved with suggestions and opportunities to learn how to help their children to study at home.

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APPENDIX A

Homework Websites

Homework Websites

KOL Homework Help
http://aolsvc.kol.aol.com/hh_mn.adp

B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper
http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck/

Homework Spot
http://www.homeworkspot.com/

Fact Monster
http://www.factmonster.com/

Multnomah County Library Homework Center Homework Help
http://www.multcolib.org/homework/

Infoplease Homework Center
http://www.infoplease.com/homework/

A+ Math (make math flashcards)
http://www.aplusmath.com/

Kid's Place – Phoenix Public Library
http://www.phoenixkidsplace.org/kpwebapp/index.jsp

National Geographic Homework Help
http://www.nationalgeographic.com/education/homework/

Math League Help Topics
http://www.mathleague.com/help/help.htm

Harcourt School Publishers Multimedia Math Glossary
http://www.hbschool.com/glossary/math2/index_temp.html

Homework Helper ref.desk.com
http://www.refdesk.com/homework.html

APPENDIX B

Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Marlene Rolfe. I am a teacher at E.T. Hamilton Elementary School. Your child, with your permission, has been selected to participate in an after school homework club. There is no charge. This is part of a research study under the supervision of Dr. Steven Crites as part of my master's thesis at Rowan University. The study is to investigate if direct instruction in study skills would benefit elementary school students.

In an effort to maximize effort spent on homework, I will be presenting mini lessons on time management, organization, self-management, and study skills. Students will then have the remainder of the session to work on their homework assignments, with teacher and peer support. **No after school bus transportation will be provided, so it will be your responsibility to arrange to pick up your child at 5:00 p.m.**

If you give your permission for your child to attend, you and your child should agree to the following conditions. You will need to complete a brief homework checklist at the beginning and end of the study. Your child will attend the Homework Club 3 days per week, for approximately 8 weeks. Your child will be expected to maintain a homework chart to promote self-management skills. For collection purposes, consent is needed for me to monitor homework assignments and report card grades from your child's teachers. **NO names will be used in the actual study**.

While regular attendance is encouraged, your child's participation is voluntary. **If at any time during this study you wish to withdraw your permission, you are free to do so.** Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his or her class.

A summary of findings will be available at the completion of the study. Again, no names will be used. Your child's participation in the study will enable me to gather information which may be beneficial to future homework interventions. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (856) 767-4888, ext. 3114 or you may contact Dr. Steven Crites at (856) 256-4500, ext. 3684.

Sincerely,

Marlene Rolfe

- -

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by Friday of this week. Please understand that no after school transportation will be provided.

_______ I grant permission for my child _________________ to participate in this study.

_______ I do not grant permission for my child _____________ to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian Signature _______________________ Date________________

APPENDIX C

Homework Problem Checklist

Homework Problem Checklist

(Anesko, Shoiock, Ramirez, & Levine, 1987)

Child's Sex: _____
Child's Grade: _____
Child's Age: _____

Child performs: _____(-1) below grade level in most subjects
_____(0) on grade level in most subjects
_____(+1) above grade level in most subjects

For each statement, check one:	**Never (0)**	**At Times (1)**	**Often (2)**	**Very Often (3)**
Fails to bring home assignment and necessary materials (textbook, dittos, etc.)				
Doesn't know exactly what homework has been assigned.				
Denies having homework assignment.				
Refuses to do homework assignment.				
Whines or complains about homework.				
Must be reminded to sit down and start homework.				
Procrastinates, puts off doing homework.				
Doesn't do homework satisfactorily unless someone is in the room.				
Doesn't do homework satisfactorily unless someone does it with him/her.				
Daydreams or plays with objects during homework session.				
Easily distracted by noises or activities of others.				
Easily frustrated by homework assignment.				
Fails to complete homework.				
Takes unusually long time to do homework.				
Responds poorly when told by parent to correct homework.				
Produces messy or sloppy homework.				
Hurries through homework and makes careless mistakes.				
Shows dissatisfaction with work, even when he/she does a good job.				
Forgets to bring assignment back to class.				
Deliberately fails to bring assignment back to class.				

APPENDIX D

Weekly Study Schedule

Weekly Study Schedule

Study Schedule for Week of _____

DATE							
TIME	**SAT.**	**SUN.**	**MON.**	**TUES.**	**WED.**	**THURS.**	**FRI.**
8:00-8:30							
8:30-9:00							
9:00-9:30							
9:30-10:00							
10:00-10:30							
10:30-11:00							
11:00-11:30							
11:30-12:00							
12:00-12:30							
12:30-1:00							
1:00-1:30							
1:30-2:00							
2:00-2:30							
2:30-3:00							
3:00-3:30							
3:30-4:00							
4:00-4:30							
4:30-5:00							
5:00-5:30							
5:30-6:00							
6:00-6:30							
6:30-7:00							
7:00-7:30							
7:30-8:00							
8:00-8:30							
8:30-9:00							

APPENDIX E

Homework Chart

Homework Chart

Week # _____ **Grade** _____

Name _____ **Teacher** _____

Number of Assignments

8				
7				
6				
5				
4				
3				
2				
1				
	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**
Daily %				

Day

Subject Color Code

- Reading
- Language(Grammar)
- Spelling
- Writing
- Math
- Social Studies
- Science
- Other

Colored block = completed with 75% accuracy or above

X block = not completed, late, or less than 75% accuracy

APPENDIX F

Institutional Review Board Disposition Form

2004-59

Appendix C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
DISPOSITION FORM

Principal Investigator Marlene Cosenza Rolfe	Co-Principal Investigator (if applicable) n/a
Address of Principal Investigator 2070 Hendricks Avenue	Address of Co-Principal Investigator
City, State, and Zip Code Waterford, NJ 08089	City, State, and Zip Code
Telephone # Fax # e-mail address (856) 768-4159 ROLconect@aol.com	Telephone # Fax # e-mail address

TITLE OF RESEARCH A study of the effect of a homework club on the completion of homework by students with and without learning disabilities

ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSITION - DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Your claim for exemption for the research study identified above has been reviewed. The action taken is indicated below:

_____ APPROVED FOR EXEMPTION AS CLAIMED: CATEGORY # _____
Note: Anything that materially changes the exempt status of this study must be presented to the IRB for approval before the changes are implemented. Such modifications should be sent to the IRB Office at the address above.

_____ APPROVED FOR EXEMPTION - BUT NOT AS CLAIMED. Your claim for exemption does not fit the criteria for exemption designated in your proposal. However, the study does meet the criteria for exemption under CATEGORY # _____.

_____ A determination regarding the exempt status of this study cannot be made at this time. Additional information is required.

_____ Your proposal does not meet the criteria for exemption, and a full review will be provided by the IRB.

EXPEDITED REVIEW: ✓ Approved _____ Denied

FULL REVIEW: _____ Approved _____ Approved with modifications _____ Denied

DENIED: _____

See attached Committee Action Letter for additional comments.

J. Surak	Bud
Chair, IRB	Co-Chair, IRB
Date 2/20/04	Date 2/18/04

APPENDIX G

District Permission Letter

VOORHEES
TOWNSHIP
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Edward T. Hamilton School
(856) 767-4888

Kristine A. diCoio
Principal

January 21, 2004

Mrs. Marlene Rolfe
2070 Hendricks Avenue
Waterford, New Jersey 08089

Dear Mrs. Rolfe:

I am writing this letter to confirm that the Voorhees Township School District has granted you permission to work on your thesis by running a special after-school program at our school.

Sincerely yours,

Kristine A. diCoio

Kristine A. diCoio
Principal

Northgate Drive, Voorhees, New Jersey 08043