Homework practices and attitudes of secondary students with learning disabilities: a comparison of classroom settings

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Homework Practices and Attitudes of Secondary Students with Learning Disabilities: A Comparison of Classroom Settings

by

Melissa E. Smith

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division of Rowan University May 1, 1997

Approved by ________ Professor

Date Approved ________
The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.

The subjects of the study were 30 students in grades seven and eight in special education, resource center, or inclusive classrooms in a southern Gloucester County regional school district. Students responded to the Student Survey of Homework Practices before and after self-monitoring during a marking period. Students were asked to rate the frequency of each statement using a Likert-type scale. High scores indicated negative practices and attitudes toward homework.

Students were compared according to classroom setting (self-contained, resource center, or inclusive). Each hypothesis was analyzed through the use of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Each of the four hypotheses was not supported because changes in students' homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant.
The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity. Each of the four hypotheses was not supported because changes in students' homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank most sincerely the following people who played a significant role in the completion of this project:

Dr. S. Jay Kuder, project adviser, Rowan University, whose valued guidance, advice, and time contributed to the successful completion of the project. (Dr. Kuder’s classroom instruction and workshops were also very important to launching the author’s career in Special Education.)

Dr. Midge Shuff, professor, Rowan University, whose valued teaching and time contributed to the successful completion of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Special Education and fulfillment of a dream to teach in the Southern Gloucester County Regional High School District.

The administration and staff of the Southern Gloucester County Regional High School District, whose time and assistance helped to launch, conduct, and conclude the project.

Mrs. Celia Sparacio and Mrs. Grace Capizola, whose guidance, inspiration, and support provided limitless motivation from start to finish.

The author’s friends, Karin, Wayne, Pam, Piera, Jill, Carolyn, the M.A. in S.E. Class of 1997, and her family for their endless hours of support and encouragement throughout the program.
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Chapter One

Scope of the Study

Introduction

Educational techniques and theories may change from year to year, but one aspect of learning that remains consistent is homework. Homework is assigned several times a week for most students, even as debates rage among educators regarding the positive and negative impacts of work done after classes end for the day.

Homework is assigned for a variety of reasons. Those reasons include increasing students' mastery of a skill, increasing students' involvement in the learning process, strengthening students' senses of responsibility and time management, and preparing students for future assignments or tests. Homework is assigned to involve parents in their children's education as well. According to research, (e.g., Epstein, 1988) homework enhances communication between parents and children and informs everyone about classroom activities. In addition, homework is a required portion of students' grades.

Research studies generally indicate that there is a positive relationship between the amount of time students spend doing homework and how well those same students perform for grades and achievement test scores. The more time students spend doing homework, the higher their grades and achievement test scores will be (e.g, Keith & Page, 1985; Walberg, 1984). Other positive effects of homework include improved student attitudes toward school, better study habits, higher comprehension and retention of lessons, and more parental involvement in education (Alleman & Brophy, 1991;
While homework is an effective educational tool, students face several problems in completing assignments successfully. In general, students who have low motivation and get little teacher feedback on homework assignments routinely fail to complete their work (e.g., Salend & Schlif, 1989). In addition, social functions, extracurricular activities, sports, television, and the telephone are a few activities that interfere with successful homework completion (Gregory, Shanahan, & Walberg, 1986). When students set aside enough time to get assignments done, they often find they have forgotten materials in school (e.g., Gajria & Salend, 1995).

It is noted with interest that research has found similarities in some attitudes and problems regarding homework for both special education and regular education students (e.g., Gajria & Salend, 1995). Some of those similarities include: believing that homework is not important, forgetting the assignment, forgetting to take home appropriate materials to complete assignments, misunderstanding assignments, procrastinating, failing to follow a homework schedule, and offering excuses for not finishing assignments. Furthermore, both groups of students agreed in the surveys that doing extracurricular activities and spending time with friends were more important than completing homework assignments. Finally, both groups indicated they would start their homework without making an assignment list or planning study time.

For special education students, research on the effectiveness of homework has yielded positive results (e.g., Rosenberg, 1989). Learning disabled students increased their proficiencies in basic skills when they did homework. Students also raised their
grades after homework was completed. Furthermore, learning disabled students in mainstream general education classes achieved more academically when they did their homework. Finally, proponents of homework also argue that it increases time spent on academic work and encourages stronger self-discipline (e.g., Walberg, Paschal, & Weinstein, 1985).

Learning-disabled students experience several problems when they try to complete homework assignments, according to research (e.g., Gregory et al., 1986). Major barriers for special education students include very negative attitudes toward and low motivation to complete homework. Learning-disabled students also tend to be much more distracted and less able to concentrate during homework time than their non-disabled classmates. In addition, learning-disabled students have a tougher time managing the clock and giving enough attention to assignments. In general, research shows that learning-disabled students need to be reminded to complete homework, take a longer time to start homework, complain frequently, and do not know where to start assignments (e.g., Polloway et al., 1994).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.
Statement of the Hypotheses

Given the possible positive effects of homework for students with learning disabilities, the following hypotheses were developed.

1. Secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.

2. Secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

3. Secondary students who are in resource center classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

4. Secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

Subjects

Subjects of this study included 30 students with and without learning disabilities from grades seven and eight in a suburban New Jersey regional middle school. Student attitudes about homework were surveyed. If self-monitoring improves students' homework practices and attitudes as the hypotheses state, this suggests that several approaches may work in teaching students how to complete homework successfully.
Based on the hypotheses, some suggestions for successful completion of homework include using a team approach among teachers, parents, and students when implementing self-monitoring, establishing a system of record-keeping for the self-monitoring chart, and ensuring that homework is assigned in the appropriate amount for the students' appropriate grade level of functioning. In addition, students will improve self-monitoring techniques if teachers evaluate all homework assignments, notify students and parents early when special materials are needed for homework, and make homework a review of skills being taught, not new information or previously untested skills (Mims, Harper, Armstrong, & Savage, 1991).

Self-monitoring techniques are successful when teachers vary the amount and type of assignment, provide motivation for doing the assignment, use peer-assisted strategies for students and provide prompt feedback to improve attitudes and completion rates. Self-monitoring also will improve if students follow a regular homework schedule in school and at home. A final implication of the study emphasizes parental involvement in children's education to improve self-monitoring techniques.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this paper, the following definitions will be used:

Homework: Lessons to be studied or schoolwork to be done outside the classroom.

Student Survey of Homework Practices: A 27-item, Likert-type questionnaire examining students' homework practices and attitudes toward homework.

SSHP: Student Survey of Homework Practices.
The remaining chapters in the thesis will present a review of literature in chapter 2, details about the research design in chapter 3, an analysis of results in chapter 4, and a discussion of the implications of the study in chapter 5. The literature review in chapter 2 discusses key similarities and differences in homework completion for students with and without learning disabilities.
Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

During the 1980s and early 1990s, researchers explored how homework affected the educational process. As a result, suggestions were offered of how to use homework to improve the quality of education in America (Mims, Harper, Armstrong, & Savage, 1991). These suggestions included establishing a method of record keeping, ensuring that all assignments are on an appropriate academic level and can be finished within two hours for all subjects, notifying parents and students in a timely manner when special materials will be needed for assignments, grading all homework, using homework as a tool for review of skills, avoiding homework that requires use of skills not previously taught, allowing time to start homework in school, considering the ability level of students, and avoiding homework as a tool for punishment (Mims et al., 1991).

Since then, educators have relied on the results of homework research studies conducted in classrooms (Mims et al., 1991). Homework theory, advice, and impacts for successful implementation are discussed in research studies designed for both teachers and parents (Mims et al., 1991). This type of research about homework was gathered in urban and rural areas using instruments such as checklists, questionnaires, surveys, interview responses, and self-recording charts.

According to research conducted by Heller, Spooner, Anderson, and Mims (1988), effective homework has the following attributes. Homework assignments must
be teacher-directed, include only previously acquired skills, be a planned extension of schoolwork, be evaluated, be based on individualized education program (IEP) objectives, and occur outside school hours. Homework may be completed with or without others' assistance.

Keith (1986) defined homework as work that teachers commonly assign for completion outside normal class time. Cooper (1989) suggested that homework assignments are those "assigned to students by school teachers...meant to be carried out during non-school hours" (p. 7). Cooper also suggested that students may have additional opportunities to complete homework assignments in school, such as during study hall, library time, or other classes. In the definition, Cooper assumed further that most homework is completed independently at home, although students may complete portions of assignments in school. Cooper (1989) excluded assignments such as in-school guided study, home video lessons, audio cassette lessons, television lessons, and extracurricular activities (clubs or teams) from his definition.

Olympia, Sheridan, and Jenson (in press) defined homework as "academic work assigned in school that is designed to extend the practice of academic skills into other environments during non-school hours." This definition highlights the importance of students generalizing what is learned in the classroom and using those skills outside of school.

Effective Homework

According to Epstein (1988), effective homework is assigned for seven basic reasons. Those reasons include: practice (to increase speed, mastery, and skill
maintenance); participation (to increase students' involvement with learning); personal development (to strengthen students' sense of responsibility and time management skills); parent-child relations (to enhance communications between parents and children regarding school); policy (to fulfill administrative directives about homework); public relations (to inform parents about class activities); and punishment (to remind students of academic or behavioral requirements).

According to Keith and Page (1985) and Walberg (1984), research studies generally indicated that there is a positive relationship between the amount of time students spend doing homework and how well those same students perform for grades and achievement test scores. The more time students spend doing homework, the higher their grades and achievement test scores will be (Keith & Page, 1985; Walberg, 1984). Cooper (1989) found this relationship to be true in his research as well, specifically at the junior and senior high school grades. Other positive effects of homework include: improved student attitudes toward school, better study habits, more understanding and retention of lesson points, and more parental involvement in the educational process (Alleman & Brophy, 1991; Cooper & Nye, 1994).

Homework and Regular Education Students

According to Cooper (1989), homework assignments have both negative and positive effects on the achievement of regular education students. Among the positive effects, Cooper (1989) cited immediate achievement and learning with students demonstrating better retention of facts, higher comprehension rates, stronger critical thinking skills, better concept formation, and faster information processing. Cooper
(1989) also found homework assignments had long-term effects because students had more of a willingness to learn during free time, an improved attitude toward school, and better study skills. According to Cooper (1989), homework had positive effects not related to academics for students, such as: higher self-direction, stronger self-discipline, better time management skills, more of a willingness to question, and stronger independent problem-solving skills. Cooper (1989) concluded that homework assignments give parents more opportunities to be involved and appreciate their children's schooling.

In his research, Cooper (1989) also found negative effects of assigning homework to students. Among the problems regular education students face in completing homework successfully, Cooper (1989) cited students' loss of interest in academics, physical and emotional fatigue, and loss of time for recreation or community activities. According to Cooper (1989), parents contributed negatively to the effects of homework when they pressured their children to complete assignments and perform well. Cooper (1989) concluded that such pressure on students may have contributed to cheating or copying. Finally, Cooper (1989) found that homework is less effective when it shows increased differences in high- and low-achieving students.

Homework and Special Education Students

For special education students, research on the effects of homework also has yielded mixed results. According to Rosenberg (1989), learning disabled students acquired and achieved fluency in basic skills when they completed homework assignments. In his study, Rosenberg (1989) found that homework had the most positive
impact on students when they finished assignments correctly and showed at least moderate acquisition of lesson content.

Special education students' grades also rose after they did homework assignments, according to Trammel, Schloss, and Alper (1994). In their study, Trammel et al. (1994) conducted research in which students used self-recording, evaluation, and graphing procedures to monitor how many homework assignments students completed during 73 consecutive school days. Trammel et al. (1994) found a positive relationship between the students' use of self-monitoring procedures and the number of homework assignments those same students completed. Trammel et al. (1994) reported that goal-setting and self-graphing by students seemed to increase the effectiveness of self-monitoring.

During this study, students used an assignment sheet to record each assignment for a particular school day.

Furthermore, learning disabled and emotionally disturbed students who were mainstreamed in general education classes achieved more academically when they successfully completed homework tasks, according to researchers (e.g., Truesdell & Abramson, 1992). Other proponents of homework also argue that it increases time spent on academic work and encourages strong self-discipline (Walberg, Paschal, & Weinstein, 1985).

Barriers for Special Education Students

While homework may be used as an effective educational tool for special education students, one major barrier to successful homework completion is student attitude, according to Gregory, Shanahan, and Walberg (1986). Gregory et al. (1986)
found that special education students often have a very negative attitude toward homework. As a comparison, Gregory et al. (1986) indicated that special education students spend 1 to 3 hours per week doing homework. Conversely, those same students spend 3 to 4 hours per day watching television or participating in extracurricular activities, according to the study.

To discover the problems that learning disabled students face in completing homework, several researchers have surveyed parents and teachers about the topic (e.g. Epstein, Polloway, Foley, & Patton, 1993; Polloway, Epstein, & Foley, 1992). Epstein et al. (1993) asked randomly selected Illinois special education teachers to choose one special education student from each of their classes and complete a Homework Problem Checklist on the selected student. The special education teachers, in turn, asked for cooperation of regular education teachers from the same district. Regular education teachers followed the same procedure as the special education teachers in randomly selecting a student and completing a Homework Problem Checklist on the selected student. Parents of selected regular and special education students also were sent parent checklists to provide Epstein et al. (1993) with their personal judgments about homework. Results of the Epstein et al. (1993) study demonstrated that special education students have more problems completing homework successfully than their regular education peers. Examples of problems for special education students included procrastination, failure to remember assignments, daydreaming, and distraction, according to Epstein et al. (1993).

Salend and Schliff (1989) maintained that special education students had
homework motivation problems because teachers failed to give feedback on the assignments, failed to incorporate the assignments into school grading policies, and/or failed to include parents in the homework process. Polloway et al. (1992) found that teachers and parents thought learning-disabled students battled more motivational and distractibility-related homework completion problems that did their non-disabled peers.

Gajria and Salend (1995) surveyed special education students to discover what problems they face in successfully completing homework. (The average student age was 13.6). Students who completed the Student Survey of Homework Practices indicated why doing homework was such a difficult task. According to the results of the survey, learning-disabled students had a tougher time managing time and giving enough attention to assignments. These students indicated they would lose interest in assignments after 30 minutes, would become distracted from the work, or would need help from another person to finish the work.

Gajria and Salend (1995) also indicated that low motivation was another homework problem for learning disabled students. According to the same survey, special education students needed to be reminded to begin homework, took a long time to start homework, complained about assignments, and were unsure of which assignments to start.

In the same study, Gajria and Salend (1995) found that learning disabled students encountered problems with ineffective study skills. These ineffective skills further contributed to special education students' difficulties with homework. For example, learning disabled students failed to accurately estimate time needed to complete
assignments, failed to check for assignment completeness, stopped doing homework if it
appeared too difficult, and began working on easier assignments first, rather than
completing more difficult assignments at the beginning of a homework session.

According to the survey, special education students also indicated that projects and lab
work were difficult to complete because students did not break those tasks into smaller
segments and work on each part individually (Gajria & Salend, 1995).

It is noted with interest that Gajria and Salend (1995) found similarities in some
attitudes and problems regarding homework for both special education and
regular education students. Some of those similarities include: believing that homework
is not important, forgetting the assignment, forgetting to take home appropriate materials
to complete assignments, misunderstanding assignments, procrastinating, failing to
follow a homework schedule, and offering excuses for not finishing assignments.

Furthermore, both groups of students agreed in the surveys that doing extracurricular
activities and spending time with friends were more important than completing
homework assignments. Finally, both groups indicated they would start their homework
without making an assignment list or planning study time.

According to Polloway, Epstein, Bursuck, Jayanthi, and Cumblad (1994),
home
work "is an important feature of the general education curriculum and must be
addressed in any efforts toward effecting successful inclusion programs" (p.506). The
purpose of their study was to survey the homework practices of national sample of 441
elementary, middle, and senior high school teachers who instruct students with
disabilities. The teachers were questioned about their homework practices and
adaptations used to accommodate students with special needs. In their study, Polloway et al. (1994) indicated that teachers used consistent homework practices for learning disabled students. For example, homework was assigned at least three times per week across grade levels. The results indicated that students received more homework as grade levels increased. In terms of the type of homework assigned, unfinished classwork was the most frequent assignment, according to the study. The second most popular assignments were practice exercises, according to the results. Polloway et al. (1994) maintained that practice assignments are best suited for learning disabled students because they reinforce material learned in class and are not too complex. The researchers cautioned against the use of extension activities for learning disabled students because these activities usually require more in-class adaptation and support to ensure student success, according to the study. Polloway et al. (1994) provided the most compelling caution against homework assignments designed to prepare students for future classwork. According to the results, "teachers found preparation for future classwork least helpful for students with learning disabilities" (p. 506).

Strategies for Successful Homework Completion

In order for students to successfully complete homework assignments, teachers, parents, and students themselves must work together as a team to meet the challenges of learning. As more and more schools move toward full inclusion, special and regular educators also will work as a team to meet students' needs. Mims, Harper, Armstrong, and Savage (1991) offered several suggestions for educators and parents to help children strive for homework success.
Polloway et al. (1994) also cited several successful adaptations for teachers such as: giving extra assistance through after-school homework clinics or tutoring, checking more frequently with students about assignment requirements or expectations, and allowing alternate responses.

For students who chronically do not complete homework, Polloway et al. (1994) offered several intervention strategies. According to the researchers, teachers will encourage success if they talk with students about assignments, discuss their progress, and develop adaptations in assignments to match ability levels.

Patton (1994) discussed intervention strategies that educators could use in September to assess students' homework strengths and weaknesses. According to Patton, surveys such as the Homework Problem Checklist help educators to identify problems before they become chronic. Patton's other suggestions emphasized the importance of parental involvement, assigning homework from the beginning of the year, scheduling times and routines for homework (as indicated in previous studies), communicating the consequences for not doing assignments, minimizing the demands on teacher time through prior planning, coordinating assignments with other teachers whenever possible, presenting homework instructions clearly, verifying assignments by questioning students about what is to be done, allowing students time to start assignments in class (as previously noted), mandating that students keep signed assignment books, creating incentive plans for completed assignments (such as point systems), having parents sign and date homework, and evaluating assignments. Once students, teachers, and parents make commitments to improve the rate of successful homework completion, intervention
strategies may be examined more closely.

**Homework and Self-Management**

Self-management procedures have been shown to successfully remediate a variety of academic and behavior problems exhibited in the classroom by students. Self-management interventions have been successful in increasing the rate of homework completion in special education students, increasing on-task behavior in students with learning disabilities, increasing reading performance in students with behavior disorders, and decreasing disruptive behaviors in children with hyperactivity, according to researchers (e.g., Cole & Bambara, 1992).

Self-management techniques involve teaching students to take action designed to change or maintain their own behavior (Cole & Bambara, 1992). Self-management classroom interventions involve teaching students to engage in a behavior (e.g., self-monitoring) in an effort to change the probability of occurrence of a target behavior (e.g., academic productivity, disruptive behavior), according to Cole and Bambara (1992). Skills taught within self-management include self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement (Cole & Bambara, 1992).

According to Cole and Bambara (1992), self-monitoring involves instructing students to observe specific aspects of their own behavior and provide an objective recording of these observations. When students monitor themselves, they will use self-observation and self-recording to complete the procedure. Generally, studies have shown that focusing one's attention on one's own behavior and self-recording these observations may result in positive effects or improvement in the behavior being monitored (Cole &
When a student assesses whether a target behavior has occurred and records the result in some way, self-monitoring has taken place (Rankin & Reid, 1995). According to Rankin and Reid (1995), self-monitoring is an example of a cognitive-behavioral intervention because it uses behavioral, cognitive, and developmental approaches to changing behavior. Self-monitoring attempts to change students' behavior through changing their thoughts.

According to Rankin and Reid (1995), this method is useful for students with mild learning disabilities who experience difficulties with self-regulation of behavior, external locus of control, maladaptive attributions, and learned helplessness. Self-monitoring is useful because it gives students new ways to think about their behavior and understand that their behavior is under personal control rather than under the control of someone else (Rankin & Reid, 1995). According to Rankin and Reid (1995), self-monitoring helps students understand that they have the power to select and control their behaviors; these behaviors will lead to key outcomes or consequences.

Self-monitoring of attention has been used successfully with students with mild learning disabilities, according to Rankin and Reid (1995). Generally, students who are taught to self-monitor show increases in attention to academic work, resulting in decreases of disruptive behavior (Rankin & Reid, 1995).

Self-monitoring of academic skills also has been used successfully with students with mild learning disabilities, according to Rankin and Reid (1995). Generally, students are taught to assess their academic productivity or accuracy of answers. Then, students
monitor and record their performance during a specific time in class. These performance results are placed on a daily chart or graph to create a record of ongoing progress.

In a 1994 study by Trammel, Schloss, and Alper, eight learning-disabled students between the ages of 13 and 16 used a self-monitoring technique to increase the number of daily homework assignments completed. The experimental procedure involved students using a sheet listing all daily assignments given by regular classroom teachers. A multiple-baseline design across school subjects showed a clear relationship between the introduction of the self-monitoring technique and an increase in the number of assignments completed (Trammel, Schloss, & Alper, 1994). Goal setting and self-graphing of data seemed to increase this effect (Trammel et al., 1994).

According to Trammel et al. (1994), the introduction of the self-monitoring phase resulted in an increase of completed assignments across students. Self-monitoring resulted in each student successfully completing between four and six assignments per day, according to Trammel et al. (1994). This trend continued throughout the phase, despite removal of teacher participation in the treatment (Trammel et al., 1994).

During the self-graphing and goal-setting phase, the increased rate in student performance was maintained (Trammel et al., 1994). During the last four days of the phase, each student set a goal of five or six assignments completed. Two students failed to achieve that goal (Trammel et al., 1994).

In the maintenance phase, all students continued to complete from four to six assignments daily. In addition, each student completed at least five assignments daily during follow-up checks completed on the 90th and 110th days of the program (Trammel
Students in the study increased their rates of successful homework completion through self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-graphing. In addition, the students' regular classroom teachers reported improved attitudes about homework and enjoyment of schoolwork (Trammel et al., 1994). Students' grades were higher as a result of increased rates of successful homework completion.

To begin a self-monitoring program, a survey may be conducted to gather information about students' attitudes toward homework. In a 1995 study by Gajria and Salend, 48 regular education students and 48 learning-disabled students ranging in age from 11 to 15 completed the Student Survey of Homework Practices, a 27-item, Likert-type questionnaire. The questionnaire examined students' homework practices and attitudes toward homework.

Results of the survey indicated that both groups had some similar homework practices. However, results also indicated that students with learning disabilities engaged in practices that interfered with successful homework completion more frequently (Gajria & Salend, 1995).

According to Gajria and Salend (1995), questions for the survey were based on literature reviews, interviews with regular and special education teachers, and the Homework Problem Checklist (HPC). Ten of the SSHP items are similar to items on the HPC. Other items on the SSHP examine students' attitudes toward homework and use of effective study habits.

Gajria and Salend (1995) found that learning-disabled students had difficulties in
maintaining motivation and attention to their homework assignments. Learning-disabled students also indicated higher degrees of distractibility when attempting to complete assignments (Gajria & Salend, 1995). According to Gajria and Salend (1995), students with learning disabilities also lacked effective study skills and had difficulties with breaking larger tasks into a series of smaller steps.

While the questionnaire used for the present study (SSHP) surveyed a limited geographical area, the results provide information about students' practices and attitudes toward homework. These results help regular and special educators to plan effective strategies for increasing students' rates of successful homework completion. Chapter 3 discusses the research design of the present study and how the SSHP was used. The purpose of the present study was to determine if secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms would improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity. It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.
Chapter Three
Design of the Study

Subjects

The population of the study included special education, resource center, and inclusion students in a southern New Jersey county in grades seven and eight. The subjects of the study included 30 students in grades seven and eight who were placed in special education, resource center, or inclusive classrooms in a southern Gloucester County regional school district. The students in the inclusive classrooms were a combination of regular education and special education students. All subjects were from one regional middle school in a rural school district in the southern portion of the state of New Jersey.

To obtain participants, I contacted the director of special education in the school district and explained the objectives of the study. Once the Student Survey of Homework Practices (a 27-item Likert-type questionnaire) was approved, I approached the school supervisor of curriculum and the principal to obtain permission to contact teachers who had students who were enrolled in special education, resource center, or inclusive classes. Teachers in grades seven and eight were asked to identify pupils who were special education students and regular education students in the inclusive classrooms. Pupils were classified as special education students according to New Jersey state regulations.

Special education students included in the sample had been receiving special education services from one to eight years. Some students received instruction in self-
contained classrooms, while other students received instruction in resource center or inclusive classrooms. All students were mainstreamed for physical education, health, wood shop, home economics, music, art, and keyboarding.

Questionnaire

The Student Survey of Homework Practices (SSHP) has 27 Likert-type items designed to examine students' attitudes and practices when doing homework. Items on the questionnaire were developed based on literature reviews, interviews with regular and special education teachers, and the Homework Problem Checklist (Gajria & Salend, 1995). The Homework Problem Checklist (HPC) is designed to examine students' homework-related difficulties and has shown validity and reliability (Gajria & Salend, 1995). Ten of the items from the SSHP are close to items from the HPC.

Other items on the Student Survey of Homework Practices are designed to explore student attitudes toward homework and use of effective study skills (Gajria & Salend, 1995). Some examples of items include, "I get easily distracted when I am doing my homework," and "I complain about homework" (Gajria & Salend, 1995). When the questionnaire was developed, Gajria and Salend (1995) requested that five classroom teachers review the items for 'completeness, comprehension, and style' (Gajria & Salend, 1995). The items were revised based on teachers' comments. In addition, 10 students were given an initial version of the questionnaire to confirm that the items were understandable.

The 27 items in the Student Survey of Homework Practices are presented in the appendix. Students were asked to rate the frequency of each statement using a Likert-
type scale: \(0 = \text{never, } 1 = \text{at times, } 2 = \text{often, } 3 = \text{very often}\).

**Design**

The design chosen for this study was descriptive research involving the collection of data to test hypotheses and answer questions. The Student Survey of Homework Practices was included to gain information from students about their homework practices and attitudes both before and after students used self-monitoring techniques to track their homework completion rates. Baseline data were gathered prior to the initiation of self-monitoring activities through students completion of the SSHP.

**Procedures**

Teachers of students in Grades 7 and 8 in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms were contacted and asked to assist with selection of subjects. Teachers of inclusion students identified those students who were classified as special education pupils.

I then met with each student to explain the purpose of the study and confidentiality. The survey was administered to students twice. The students completed the survey before self-monitoring procedures were introduced, and they completed the survey again after the completion of self-monitoring activities. The surveys were administered during regular class time. In both cases, instruction was provided to students on how to complete the survey. Once students had indicated they knew how to complete the survey, teachers made themselves available to help students who had trouble understanding an item. Each survey took between 15 and 20 minutes.

Self-monitoring instruction was implemented in special education, resource
center, and inclusive classrooms. The study was conducted for 45 consecutive school days. Most homework assignments consisted of practice exercises, written paragraphs, or reading assignments based on materials taught in classes that day. Homework assignments were given according to mandatory guidelines listed in the district's curriculum. While teachers could skip around the curriculum, each of the listed proficiencies had to be addressed through homework assignments. Each assignment had specific objectives and was matched to the student's ability level. Teachers also discussed each assignment in class.

The study mandated that students chart completed homework for each assignment. Assignments were given, on average, two to four times per week. This rate remained constant throughout the study. Students who were absent were given the identical number of days to make up missed work. Make-up assignments were tallied as they were completed also.

An assignment sheet was created for pupils to record each assignment for a particular school day. Homework was assigned two to four times per week in all classes but physical education classes. As a result, physical education was not included on the assignment sheet, leaving seven periods in which homework was expected on a routine basis.

Modeling and guided practice techniques were used to demonstrate the proper way for students to complete the assignment sheet. Students held a sample assignment sheet and first listened as I explained how to record a name for the day's assignment, date, and proper symbol for completion of the assignment on the chalkboard. Then,
students followed guided practice and completed the sample with me one box at a time, recording the assignment name, date, and symbol for assignment completion in the proper spaces. Students recorded assignments next to the appropriate subject and date for each assignment. In most cases, students copied the assignment from the chalkboard or listened to a teacher's verbal directions. A check mark in the box indicated a completed assignment, an X indicated incomplete work, and a zero (0) indicated that no assignment was completed. In order for an assignment to be deemed complete, 70 percent mastery was required, based on district grading guidelines.

Each classroom teacher maintained a folder with each student's name and assignment sheet. Teachers monitored students' completion of the assignment sheets as homework was checked. The self-monitoring phase began as students recorded their homework assignments on the assignment sheet. The self-monitoring phase was conducted in the following manner:

1. Students obtained an assignment sheet from the teacher to record their name and class subject.
2. The students recorded whether the assignment had been successfully completed as the teacher also checked the homework.
3. The students placed the assignment sheet in the folder for collection by the teacher after each homework assignment was recorded.
4. The teachers initialed the assignment sheets to verify the students' responses on the assignment sheets.
5. Each assignment on the self-monitoring assignment sheet corresponded with the homework assignments listed in the teachers' grade books. Students received verbal praise and positive written comments on work for successful homework completion.

The final phase of the program involved students completing the Student Survey of Homework Practices once again to see if student attitudes about homework completion were changed as a result of the self-monitoring activities. Assignment sheets were then completed by students at their own discretion after the survey was administered a second time.

When students took the surveys a second time, 30 students of an original sample of 60 students in 10 different classes were dropped from the study because pre-test surveys and homework checklists were lost. In addition, teachers and students from these groups inadvertently failed to follow directions and did not complete all three phases of the study correctly. For example, some students took homework checklists home instead of leaving them in the classroom, causing data to be lost. Some teachers also chose to complete the checklists for students instead of having students complete the self-monitoring checklists. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the present study.
Chapter Four
Research Findings

Results of the Study

The Student Survey of Homework Practices, checklists, and instruction sheets were distributed to eight middle school special education teachers for 60 students in a New Jersey school district in southern Gloucester County. The study was conducted during the third quarter of the school calendar, a 45-day period between January and March. The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.

The method chosen for this study was descriptive research involving the collection of data to test hypotheses and answer questions. The Student Survey of Homework Practices was included to gain information from students about their homework practices and attitudes both before and after students used self-monitoring techniques to track their homework completion rates. Baseline data were gathered prior to the initiation of self-monitoring activities through students’ completion of the SSHP. The next phase included the use of a daily self-monitoring homework chart on which students recorded whether they had completed homework assignments satisfactorily. In the final phase of the study, students completed a post-test survey of the SSHP to
determine whether their homework practices and attitudes changed after self-monitoring activities had ended. A total of 30 students participated in all three phases of the study and returned usable data.

Statistical Analyses of Data

Parametric tests were needed to analyze the data because of the Likert-type, interval scale of the SSHP. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether two scores compared in the hypotheses were significantly different for the .05 probability level.

The scores were translated as follows for each question: one point was given for a "never" answer, two points were given for an "at times" answer, three points were given for an "often" answer, four points were given for a "very often" answer, and five points were given for a "no response" to a question. The values for each answer were recorded in the right margin of the page. The values for each question were then added to gain a total score for each page. Lastly, the total scores from each page were added together to determine an overall score for each pre-test and post-test.

Students were divided for comparison according to the type of classroom setting they attended (self-contained, resource center, or inclusive). Each hypothesis was analyzed through the use of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The probability of chance was calculated at .05. Standard deviations for the means were also calculated. Means, standard deviations, and the Analysis of Variance with an F test were calculated for each of the hypotheses.
Tests of Hypotheses and Results

The hypotheses were:

1. Secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.

2. Secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

3. Secondary students who are in resource center classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

4. Secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

Statistical Comparisons of Data

Scores on the SSHP were analyzed to determine whether changes in attitude occurred after self-monitoring activities ended. According to information provided by survey developers Gajria and Salend (1995), higher scores are undesirable and indicate a greater use of attitudes and practices that interfere with successful homework completion because all survey items are negative in nature.
Data Related to Pre-Test Scores

Table 1 summarizes baseline pre-test data relating to group statistics of students by class assignment. There were three groups: self-contained, resource center, and inclusion. The sample number, mean score and standard deviation were recorded for each group. Self-contained students had the most negative attitude toward homework with a mean score of 63.30, followed by inclusion students with a mean score of 59.60. Resource center students had the most positive attitude toward homework with a pre-test mean score of 52.60.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63.30</td>
<td>20.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Center</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.60</td>
<td>11.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59.60</td>
<td>15.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Related to Post-Test Scores

Table 2 summarizes post-test data relating to group statistics of students by class assignment. There were three groups: self-contained, resource center, and inclusion. The sample number, mean score and standard deviation are recorded for each group. Self-contained students had the most negative attitude toward homework with a mean score of 64.70, followed by inclusion students with a mean score of 60.80. Resource center students had the most positive attitude toward homework with a post-test mean score of 58.20. Each of the three classes experienced slight overall increases in negative
attitudes toward homework at the conclusion of the self-monitoring phase of the study. However, individual students experienced decreases or no changes in negative attitudes toward homework as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>64.70</td>
<td>15.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Center</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.20</td>
<td>16.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60.80</td>
<td>18.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six students in the self-contained classroom (60%) were found to have an increase in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended, while four students in the self-contained classroom (40%) were found to have a decrease in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended.

Six students in the resource center classroom (60%) were found to have an increase in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended, while three students in the self-contained classroom (30%) were found to have a decrease in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended.

One student’s score (10%) remained the same during the pre-test survey and the post-test survey.

Six students in the inclusion classroom (60%) were found to have an increase in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended, while three
students in the inclusion classroom (30%) were found to have a decrease in negative attitudes toward homework after self-monitoring activities ended. One student’s score (10%) remained the same during the pre-test survey and the post-test survey. Table 3 summarizes the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Number Increase</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number Decrease</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number Same</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Center</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Related to Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity. This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 4. The rejection of the first hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement in homework practices and attitudes.
among students who are grouped in different classes.

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>429.06</td>
<td>214.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7482.8</td>
<td>277.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7911.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The F test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once it was determined that each class of students did not improve its homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity, the differences between pre-test and post-test scores were more closely examined for the first hypothesis. Table 5 summarizes the pre-test and post-test data for the group statistics of self-contained students.

The differences in scores for this group were analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. Students in self-contained classes did not improve their overall practices and attitudes toward homework to a statistically significant level, although individual students did improve their practices and attitudes after using the self-monitoring activity.
Table 5

Analysis of Variance for Self-Contained Students’ Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>204.8</td>
<td>204.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5641.2</td>
<td>313.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5846</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

F ratio | 0.65 | df = | 1, 18 |
F table (5%) | 4.41 | P-value = | 0.42 |

Table 6 summarizes the pre-test and post-test data for the group statistics of resource-center students. The differences in scores for this group were analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. Students in resource-center classes did not improve their overall practices and attitudes toward homework to a statistically significant level, although individual students did improve their practices and attitudes after using the self-monitoring activity.
Table 6

Analysis of Variance for Resource Center Students’ Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3637.2</td>
<td>202.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3734</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df =</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1, 18</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 summarizes the pre-test and post-test data for the group statistics of inclusion students. The differences in scores for this group were analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. Students in inclusion classes did not improve their overall practices and attitudes toward homework to a statistically significant level, although individual students did improve their practices and attitudes after using the self-monitoring activity.
Table 8 summarizes the pre-test and post-test data differences for the group statistics of self-contained, resource center, and inclusion students. The differences in scores for these groups were analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. Students in self-contained, resource center, and inclusion classes did not improve their overall practices and attitudes toward homework to a statistically significant level, although individual students did improve their practices and attitudes after using the self-monitoring activity.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5354</td>
<td>297.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5361.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df =</th>
<th>1, 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F table (5%)</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>P-value = 0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 summarizes the pre-test and post-test data differences for the group statistics of self-contained, resource center, and inclusion students. The differences in scores for these groups were analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences among these groups were not statistically significant, the first hypothesis was not supported. Students in self-contained, resource center, and inclusion classes did not improve their overall practices and attitudes toward homework to a statistically significant level, although individual students did improve their practices and attitudes after using the self-monitoring activity.
The second hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity. This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at 0.05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences between these groups were not statistically significant, the second hypothesis was not supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 9. The rejection of the second hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement in homework practices and attitudes among students who are grouped in inclusive classrooms when compared with students who are grouped in resource center or self-contained classrooms. Table 9 summarizes the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Variance for Self-Contained, Resource Center, and Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Pre-Test and Post-Test Score Differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>117.6</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5909.2</td>
<td>218.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6026.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F-test

- F ratio: 0.26
- df =
- F table (5%) = 3.35
- P-value = 0.76
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of post-test scores of inclusion students when compared with post-test scores of resource center students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5671.2</td>
<td>315.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df =</th>
<th>P-value =</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity. This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences between these groups were not statistically significant, the second hypothesis was not supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 10. The rejection of the second hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement in homework practices and attitudes among students who are grouped in inclusive classrooms when compared with students who are
grouped in resource center or self-contained classrooms. Table 10 summarizes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of post-test scores of inclusion students when compared with post-test scores of self-contained students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>204.8</td>
<td>204.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4925.2</td>
<td>273.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

- F ratio: 0.74, df = 1, 18
- F table (5%) = 4.41, P-value = 0.39

Data Related to Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in resource center classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity. This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences between these groups were not statistically significant, the third hypothesis was not supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 11. The rejection of the third hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement.
in homework practices and attitudes among students who are grouped in resource center classrooms when compared with students who are grouped in self-contained classrooms.

Table 11 summarizes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of post-test scores of resource center students when compared with post-test scores of self-contained students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4369.2</td>
<td>242.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4774.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test
F ratio 1.66 df = 1, 18
F table (5%) 4.41 P-value = 0.21

Data Related to Hypothesis Four

The fourth hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences between these groups were not statistically significant, the fourth hypothesis was not supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 12. The rejection of the fourth
hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement in homework practices and attitudes among students who are grouped in self-contained classrooms when compared with students who are grouped in resource center or inclusive classrooms. Table 12 summarizes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of post-test scores of self-contained students when compared with post-test scores of resource center students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4369.2</td>
<td>242.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4774.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df =</th>
<th>F table (5%)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>0.21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The fourth hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity. This hypothesis was analyzed through using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The level of significance was set at .05. The F-ratio was calculated. Because differences between these groups were not statistically significant, the fourth hypothesis was not
supported. These calculations are summarized in Table 13. The rejection of the fourth hypothesis indicated there was no statistically significant difference in the amount of improvement in homework practices and attitudes among students who are grouped in self-contained classrooms when compared with students who are grouped in resource center or inclusive classrooms. Table 13 summarizes the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of post-test scores of self-contained students when compared with post-test scores of inclusion students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>204.8</td>
<td>204.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4925.2</td>
<td>273.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The F test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>df =</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1, 18</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Findings

In the analysis of data, it was found that 60% of students in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms increased their rates of negative practices and attitudes toward homework after use of a self-monitoring activity for a full marking period. Conversely, 40% of students in self-contained classrooms decreased their rates
of negative practices and attitudes toward homework. In contrast, 30% of students in resource center or inclusive classrooms decreased their rates of negative practices and attitudes toward homework. Finally, 10% of students in resource center or inclusive classrooms had their scores for practices and attitudes toward homework remain the same after use of a self-monitoring activity.

Data analysis of the first hypothesis indicated no statistically significant differences in the amounts of improvement in homework practices and attitudes in the scores of students grouped according to class placement. As a result, the first hypothesis was not supported. The first hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.

Data analysis of the second hypothesis indicated no statistically significant differences between the rates of improvement for inclusion students when compared with results for resource center or self-contained students. As a result, the second hypothesis was not supported. The second hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

Data analysis of the third hypothesis indicated no statistically significant differences between the rates of improvement for resource center students when compared with results for self-contained students. As a result, the third hypothesis was not supported. The third hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in resource
center classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

Data analysis of the fourth hypothesis indicated no statistically significant differences between the rates of improvement for self-contained students when compared with results for resource center or inclusion students. As a result, the fourth hypothesis was not supported. The fourth hypothesis stated that secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

In summary, changes in homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant for groups of students in self-contained, resource center or inclusive classrooms. However, individual students did experience both positive and negative shifts in homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity for a marking period. In addition, two students indicated no change in their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of the present study.
Chapter Five

Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.

Summary of the Hypotheses

Four hypotheses were investigated for the study.

1. Secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.

2. Secondary students who are in inclusive classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

3. Secondary students who are in resource center classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

4. Secondary students who are in self-contained classrooms will improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in
resource center or inclusive classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

Summary of Procedures

The population of the study included special education, resource center, and inclusion students in a southern New Jersey county in grades seven and eight. The subjects of the study included 30 students in grades seven and eight who were placed in special education, resource center, or inclusive classrooms in a southern Gloucester County regional school district. The students in the inclusive classrooms were a combination of regular education and special education students. All subjects were from one regional middle school in a rural school district in the southern portion of the state of New Jersey.

The students completed pre-test and post-test surveys of the Student Survey of Homework Practices (a 27-item Likert-type questionnaire) during regular class time. The students completed the surveys both before and after they used self-monitoring activities to track homework assignment completion rates. Students took the pre-test surveys in January 1997 at the beginning of the third marking period (45 consecutive school days). Students then completed self-monitoring activities between January and March 1997. At the end of the third marking period, students completed post-test surveys to indicate whether any changes in attitudes or practices had occurred. I hand scored each of the usable returned surveys at the end of the third marking period. Data was analyzed through several statistical operations, including the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Significance was set at .05.
Summary of Findings

Changes in homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant for groups of students in self-contained, resource center or inclusive classrooms. However, individual students did experience both positive and negative shifts in homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity for a marking period. In addition, two students indicated no change in their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.

A statistically significant difference was not found among scores on the SSHP and students grouped according to class placement. Therefore, the first hypothesis was not supported.

A statistically significant difference was not found between scores on the SSHP of inclusion students and students in resource center or self-contained classrooms. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not supported.

A statistically significant difference was not found between scores on the SSHP of resource center students and students in self-contained classrooms. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported.

A statistically significant difference was not found between scores on the SSHP of self-contained students and students in resource center or inclusive classrooms. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was not supported.

Conclusions

Based on analyses of data through the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), I reached the following conclusions.
1. No significant differences exist in the level of negative practices and attitudes toward homework among students grouped by class placements after using a self-monitoring activity.

2. Negative practices and attitudes toward homework are not lower for inclusion students when they are compared with students in resource center or self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity.

3. Negative practices and attitudes toward homework are not lower for resource center students when they are compared with students in self-contained classroom after using a self-monitoring activity.

4. Students in a self-contained classroom do not improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in a resource center or inclusive classroom after using a self-monitoring activity.

After completing the statistical analyses of data on the four hypotheses, each of the hypotheses was not supported. The hypotheses were not supported because no significant differences were found among scores on the SSHP and the variables of class type in the hypotheses.

Implications

Changes in homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant for groups of students in self-contained, resource center or inclusive classrooms. However, individual students did experience both positive and negative shifts in homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity for a marking period. In addition, two students indicated no change in their homework practices and attitudes.
Because there were no significant differences found among scores on the SSHP and students who are grouped according to class placement, it may be implied that students face levels of negative practices and attitudes toward homework regardless of what type of class they attend. Therefore, a change in a class placement may not decrease students' negative attitudes toward homework.

Furthermore, inclusion students did not have the most positive attitude toward homework as hypothesized. Therefore, students who are in regular education classes and special education classes have the same types of negative practices and attitudes toward homework. For example, 26 out of 30 total students in the sample (87%) indicated they never or at times needed someone to help them with homework. In reality, students in these classes need more assistance with homework than students in higher level classes. Failure to ask for help is a major obstacle to successful homework completion.

Thirdly, resource center students did not improve their homework practices and attitudes at a lower rate than students in self-contained classrooms after using a self-monitoring activity. Therefore, resource center students face the same difficulties in completing homework assignments as self-contained students. For example, 14 out of 20 students in resource center and self-contained classes (70%) indicated they became bored with homework after working for 30 minutes and quit or took a long break. Inclusion students face a similar difficulty in completing assignments. For example, 22 out of 30 students in the sample (73%) also indicated becoming bored after 30 minutes and giving up on an assignment.
Lastly, self-contained students did not improve their homework practices and attitudes at a higher rate than students in resource center or inclusive classrooms. Therefore, self-contained students need additional intervention strategies, as do students in resource center or inclusive classrooms, to improve their rates of homework completion and reduce student and teacher frustration. Student frustration is evident in the results of the SSHP. For example, 13 out of 30 students in the sample (43%) indicated that they hate homework and put off doing it until the last minute. Another 13 out of 30 students (43%) indicated that teachers are unfair and give too much homework.

Many external environmental factors affect students' practices and attitudes toward homework as well. In a research study, these factors are impossible to control. For example, students may be distracted by difficulties at home, extra-curricular activities, vacations, holidays, or fatigue. Students may lack the time or the ability to balance the demands of school, home, friends, and activities. Therefore, homework needs are met after other personal needs have been satisfied.

Negative practices and attitudes toward homework are present for students in seventh and eighth grades in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms. While some students did improve their practices and attitudes toward homework after using a daily self-monitoring checklist, post-test results at the end of the third marking period indicate that more intervention strategies must be used in special education and regular education to improve homework completion and accuracy rates. Clearly, personal practices and attitudes are very difficult to change because they become habits.
of behavior. However, research has documented positive results with key intervention strategies (discussed in chapter two) that may be used across ability and grade levels to increase homework completion and accuracy rates and lower frustration levels for students and teachers. Polloway et al. (1994) also cited several successful adaptations for teachers such as: giving extra assistance through after-school homework clinics or tutoring, checking more frequently with students about assignment requirements or expectations, and allowing alternate responses.

For students who chronically do not complete homework, Polloway et al. (1994) offered several intervention strategies. According to the researchers, teachers will encourage success if they talk with students about assignments, discuss their progress, and develop adaptations in assignments to match ability levels.

Patton (1994) discussed intervention strategies that educators could use in September to assess students' homework strengths and weaknesses. According to Patton, surveys such as the Homework Problem Checklist help educators to identify problems before they become chronic. Patton's other suggestions emphasized the importance of parental involvement, assigning homework from the beginning of the year, scheduling times and routines for homework (as indicated in previous studies), communicating the consequences for not doing assignments, minimizing the demands on teacher time through prior planning, coordinating assignments with other teachers whenever possible, presenting homework instructions clearly, verifying assignments by questioning students about what is to be done, allowing students time to start assignments in class (as previously noted), mandating that students keep signed assignment books, creating
incentive plans for completed assignments (such as point systems), having parents sign and date homework, and evaluating assignments. Because regular education and special education students share similar difficulties in completing homework, these strategies can be implemented to improve homework practices and attitudes for all students.

Limitations

Several cautions must be noted concerning interpretation of the findings of the present study. The study covered a limited geographical area and sample. Secondly, students with various types and degrees of learning disabilities differ from their regular education peers in terms of academic performance. Thirdly, several limitations are present when questionnaires are used. For example, students may not always respond accurately to a question because they do not understand a question, are not in a good mood, or are trying to appease someone else by giving an untruthful response.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Another study should be done with a larger sample.
2. Another study should be done during a semester or longer time period.
3. Another study should be done using alternate intervention strategies besides self-monitoring.
4. Another study should be done in the beginning of the year, instead of the middle of the year.
5. Another study should be done with a regular education class as a control group.
6. Another study should be done that includes feedback from students' parents and teachers to complement the findings of the SSHP.

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Will secondary students who are in self-contained, resource center, or inclusive classrooms improve their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity? It also was the intent of the study to determine if learning-disabled students in different classroom settings improved their homework practices and attitudes at different levels after using a self-monitoring activity.

The subjects of the study were 30 students in grades seven and eight in special education, resource center, or inclusive classrooms in a southern Gloucester County regional school district. Students responded to the Student Survey of Homework Practices before and after self-monitoring during a marking period. Students were asked to rate the frequency of each statement using a Likert-type scale. High scores indicated negative practices and attitudes toward homework.

Changes in homework practices and attitudes were not statistically significant for groups of students in self-contained, resource center or inclusive classrooms. However, individual students did experience both positive and negative shifts in homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity for a marking period. In addition, two students indicated no change in their homework practices and attitudes after using a self-monitoring activity.
References


Appendix

Student Survey of Homework Practices
Student Survey of Homework Practices

Directions: Circle the number that matches how you feel about these homework statements.

1. After working for 30 minutes on my homework, I lose interest and quit or take a long break.
   0 = never
   1 = at times
   2 = often
   3 = very often

2. I get easily distracted when I am doing my homework.
   0 = never
   1 = at times
   2 = often
   3 = very often

3. It takes me a long time to begin my homework.
   0 = never
   1 = at times
   2 = often
   3 = very often

4. I feel unsure about which homework assignment to do first.
   0 = never
   1 = at times
   2 = often
   3 = very often

5. It takes me a very long time to do my homework, so I get tired and cannot finish my work.
   0 = never
   1 = at times
   2 = often
   3 = very often
6. I find it very difficult to stick to my homework schedule.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

7. I must be reminded to start my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

8. I need someone to do my homework with me.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

9. I feel teachers are unfair and give too much homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

10. I feel homework is not important because you do not get graded on it.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

11. I hate doing homework and put it off until the last minute.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often
12. I go to school without completing my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

13. I complain about homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

14. I forget what homework was assigned.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

15. I make excuses for not doing my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

16. Activities such as sports and music are more important to me than doing my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

17. Being with friends is more important to me than doing my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often
18. I misunderstand the assignments and due dates.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

19. I forget to take home materials I need to complete my homework.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

20. I forget to bring my homework assignments back to class.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

21. I start my homework before making a list of homework assignments.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

22. I start my homework without spending a few minutes to plan my study time.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

23. I have problems completing extra-long assignments such as projects and lab reports because I do not divide the work into smaller parts and work on it a little at a time.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often
24. When I do not understand an assignment or find it too hard, I stop working on it.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

25. I start my homework with the subjects I like and then find no time or feel too tired to complete the assignment in other subjects.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

26. I have difficulty estimating the time needed to complete my homework, so my homework is incomplete.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often

27. After I finish my homework, I do not check to see that I have completed all my assignments.
0 = never
1 = at times
2 = often
3 = very often
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