

**THE WAY SIXTH GRADERS' ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS  
INFLUENCE THEIR PERCEPTION OF HOMEWORK**

**THESIS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**In my Masters Graduate Thesis, I investigated if there was a relationship between a sixth grader's perception of homework and his/her academic achievement level. Six students at seven local Monroe County schools were interviewed and asked questions regarding their perceptions on homework.**

**I then compared the data within each academic achievement level grouping, to see if all students felt the same way or if their academic achievement level truly did influence their perception of homework.**

**The data was analyzed qualitatively. The results demonstrated that although there were some interesting findings among these students, there was no relationship found between a sixth grader's perception of homework and his/her academic achievement level.**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework.

#### **Introduction**

I recently switched grade levels from the tedious demands of being a fourth grade teacher, which is a heavily tested year in New York State, to a middle school placement of sixth grade. Being new to this grade level, I often wondered about the issue of homework and how I can service all types of academic achieving levels in my classroom in the most effective way. I have never been a believer in busy work or assigning homework that does not serve a direct purpose to my lesson and objective. However, I also do not necessarily believe assigning all students the same homework assignment, when there are varying levels of ability, is the way to go either.

There seem to be endless viewpoints on homework from teachers, administrators, and parents however nobody seems to listen to the group most affected by it, the students. So, even though there are homework guidelines regarding an overall time limit for homework depending on a child's grade level, I

feel that there are many factors not applied into such an equation. For example, does a student who struggles more than average need more math problems to do since he could use the practice, or is less really more as to not agitate the child's frustration level? On the other hand, should a high academic achieving student even need homework if he gets the concept or will he forget the skill on a long-term basis without homework? Better still, does this student need more thought provoking homework so he can sustain or improve his high academic achieving nature and, ultimately, be ready to compete in an academically competitive world?

Since a thesis is a long process, I felt that the quest of finding out a child's perception on homework and if it relates to his academic achievement level would be helpful to myself and other educators at my grade level. I am hoping that my research centering on how sixth graders, of varying academic ability, feel about homework will give me a starting point for the further insight I am looking for. I can then be more competent in how to best service my students in the future with regards to homework.

### **Need for Study**

Homework seems to be an ongoing issue that parents, teachers, and students all contend with in many scenarios on a daily basis. With the recently raised standards in New York State, insisting that more content be covered and

retained for high school graduation, most teachers defend homework as an extension of the lesson taught. Due to time constraints homework is seen as an essential component of the learning process. They feel it imperative to be assigned for the purpose of practicing, reviewing, or completing the lesson on the information taught that day.

In this day and age, pro sports teams would never think of just playing the games and not practicing. In essence, this case is similar to using homework as a practice to fix mistakes, to learn from, and achieve a positive result.

Many frustrated parents do not understand this view when they are faced with assisting their children with homework lasting all hours of the evening. Why is this happening? Do students misunderstand the link between the lesson and the homework? Is there always a link, provided by the teacher, to understand? Do students' academic achievement levels factor into homework completion? Do they feel that there is a payoff?

There is not a lot of research regarding how students feel about homework since most of the research centers around how parents and teachers feel about the subject. It would be interesting and valuable to see how students of all different academic achievement levels perceive homework and whether their academic achievement levels have any relationship with their feelings regarding the subject.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework.

#### **Historical Background**

Homework has been quite controversial in the past and, indeed, is once again in the limelight.

Back in the 1930's the American Child Health Association classified homework as child labor and forbade it, claiming it invades on children's playtime outside of school and is too much of a burden to parents. Then, in 1957, when Sputnik was launched by the Soviets, concerns were shaken regarding the state of American education. This alarm was further awakened when American students were publicly recognized as falling behind their Japanese peers, in "A Nation at Risk" report in 1983. Homework, at this point, was again revisited as a way to bridge the gap (Denny, 2000).

Academic Research and Consulting explains,

Homework is a necessary element in setting the neurological pathways of the brain. It highlights the pathways to process and retrieve the information that has been stored in the brain. The chances for a student to retrieve information from the brain are much greater during testing if they have previously

obtained the same information during a homework assignment. Homework is the door to thinking at a higher cognitive level. (Acalogic, Inc., 2002, p. 1)

In these past three to four years, it has again been used extensively as a result of desperately trying to prepare students for challenging and newer, standardized testing. Bruce and Singh (1996) found that homework improved the overall academic achievement of eighth grade students as well as increasing their scores on these standardized tests. However, Chen and Ehrenberg (1993) found that the achievement spoken about at the older grade is reflected more in teacher-determined grades rather than actual standardized test scores. Cooper, Greathouse, Lindsay, and Nye (1998) agree with this further explaining that since the homework tasks are directly correlated with the assessment tasks rather than the actual standardized test itself, that would make sense.

LaConte (1981) breaks homework down further into three main categories: practice, preparation, and extension. Practicing assignments just revisits newly taught knowledge. Preparational assignments provide more background knowledge to the area being studied. Lastly, extension assignments try to encourage higher-level thinking and are longer assignments, encompassing past and present learning. However it is difficult for parents to know where they fit in as they see information they learned in high school taught much earlier on. Aside from wondering why homework is assigned, how beneficial it is, and how a parent can best help their child complete homework, five major themes of

parents' thinking have seemed to arise. There is a concern about their child's special needs and how they balance against school, the appropriateness of the level of independent work assigned to their child, how best to structure homework activities, how involved they should be in the completion of homework, and dealing with the frustration of not possessing the knowledge of how to successfully help their child complete an assignment (Bassler, Burrow, Hoover-Dempsey, 1995).

### **The Positives and Negatives of Homework**

Cooper (1994) found three main, overall benefits researchers attributed to homework. One was the immediate effect it has on learning and achievement. This includes retention of factual knowledge, increased understanding, better critical thinking formation of concepts, more affective informational processing, and enrichment of curriculum. The next was long-term academic effects, which includes learning during non-academic time, improved overall attitude towards school, and better study habits and skills. Lastly, homework also has nonacademic long-term effects, including independent problem solving, better time organization, encourages curiosity, self-direction, and greater self-discipline.

Also found by Cooper (1994) were negative effects reported by researchers such as a loss of interest in academic material aided by emotional and physical fatigue. Students are being denied the opportunities of leisure time and

community activities. Lastly, they are cheating via of copying from other students or having a tutor provide them with too much information.

However, when taking a close look at achievement on grades and standardized tests, research examined students who received homework and compared them with students who did not receive homework; the results seemed to vary by grade level. Students in high school who received homework did outperform their non-homework counterparts by 69%! It was noted in that study that time spent on homework outside of school rather than in had better effects than time spent studying in school and achievement effects did increase according to the amount of time spent on homework. Students in junior high only outperformed the students without homework by 35%. Homework was again more effective than a supervised study occurring during school and achievement effects did increase as more time was spent on homework. However, anything over a two hour time period did not increase achievement further. Lastly, at the elementary level, homework had no bearing on academic achievement whatsoever while in-school supervised study had a much greater impact. Cooper cautions parents to be aware that homework still teaches students good study habits and helps develop positive attitudes toward school even though it will not impact their academic achievement (Cooper, 1994).

## Homework on the Rise

The United States based National Education Association suggests the following homework guidelines (cited in Chatelaine, 2002, p. 18):

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Time Per Day</b>
K – 2nd	10 – 20 min.
3rd – 6th	30 – 60 min.
7th and up	depends on subject (varies)

However, the University of Michigan released a study showing the increased homework time from 1981 – 1997. In this amount of time homework increased from 2 ½ hours to 3 ½ hours in 9 – 11 year olds and went from 44 minutes, in 6 – 8 year olds to sometimes more than 2 hours (Denny, 2000)! Child psychologist Ruth Peters (cited in Meisner, 2002, p.110) explains “the point of homework is to practice the concepts students have been taught that day in school.” The reasoning is due to time constraints, within the school, instructional time that does not allot for practicing the skill (cited in Meisner, 2002, p. 110). Gerardo Gonzales, Dean of the Indiana University of Education, further contributes that homework, which is too simplistic, boring, or not relevant to material taught in class is not what should be assigned and is unproductive. He

also reminds the public that the idea of more homework is better is not true (cited in Denny, 2000). Cooper (1989) finds that although there are benefits to spending time on homework, there are also negative relationships between homework and achievement at the elementary levels that are widespread. He goes on to explain that children who may be experiencing difficulty in mastering basic academic skills will take longer to complete homework which has a negative effect.

Parents seem to be forever disgruntled with the type and amount of homework assigned. Many of these parents are demanding schools to review their homework policies, transferring their children to schools with homework bands, and even telling their children not to do their work. This only makes the bridge from home to school more unstable (Schevitz, 1999).

Gary Griffin of Columbia University's Teachers College, describes "good homework," especially for elementary age students, "short assignments quickly completed...long assignments uncompleted or completed with tears and tantrums are deadly" (cited in Begley, 1998, p. 50). Some good examples may be writing fictional letters from a Northerner to a Southerner and expressing their emotions about the on goings dividing the states at the time of The Civil War rather than memorizing the names, time periods, and battles of that time period (cited in Begley, 1998).

Thelma Farley taught in public schools for 20 years prior to founding Beacon Day School in Oakland, California. This school assigns no homework

until sixth grade and boasts a long wait list. The idea behind the school is to try and preserve life, claiming homework disrupts families and is not statistically proven to show results until the older grade levels (Goldstein, 2000).

There are still more data that goes on to explain a proper place at home for homework to be done makes a big difference. Students need a well-lit, quiet, and comfortable environment to do their work in that does not contain distractions. Although parents cannot manipulate the amount or type of homework, they do have control over this highly important variable, explains child psychologist Ruth Peter (cited in Meiser, 1998). Michael Ralston (cited in Meisner 1998, p. 18), director of parent involvement and training for the Dallas Independent School District, agrees by reminding us all that, "Behind every successful student is a parent who says, 'Yes, if your homework is done.'" There is still other research that backs this up by showing that students who live in clean, neat, and tidy homes do better in school. It shows that structure is important in all aspects of life. They are given deadlines, and are used to consistency (Ross, 2001). Unfortunately the students who are not born into this novelty unjustly suffer. Homework can magnify social disadvantages, which can lead to increasing differences between high and low achievers. Many times, this is where cheating can be a big contender (Cooper & Nye, 1994).

Professor Harris Cooper (as cited in Schevitz, 1999) has provided tips to aid the homework process for parents, teachers, and students. He tells parents to

be sure necessary materials are available near a quite, well-lit place to do homework. Being a motivator, role model, monitor, and mentor to your child is also important so students are guiding in the learning process and see a value in it emulated from the parents. Teachers should not overload students with homework, keep parents informed, vary the type of homework and resist giving homework as a punishment. This will help to shed some positive light on homework regarding how students view it. Lastly, students should pick a good time to do homework and be consistent with this time on a daily basis. They should remember to make time for long-term projects, spend more time on harder homework than easier assignments, ask for help if homework is too hard and find a place that makes studying easy.

A counselor's role in homework completion is also an upcoming topic that researchers have found intriguing (Hong & Rowell, 2002). During a recent study, it was found that the relationship between the amount of homework assigned and academic achievement was weak, however the amount of homework students completed was what showed a positive correlation with achievement. So, students that spend large amounts of time on homework but do not finish the assignments do not necessarily have a high correlation with academic achievement (Cooper, Greathouse, Lindsay, & Nye, 1998). Counselors are believed to be another venue in implementing different types of interventions to aid in students' attitudes and skills while completing homework.. The counselor

can be a resource for teachers and parents, a facilitator of groups that work on homework problems, or an instructor in classroom guidance activities for all students regarding homework motivation and learning preferences. During these services, counselors would be more involved with teachers, administrators, parents, and students in relation to the issue of student achievement. There is a strong belief that adding this homework intervention component to a counselor's program is an excellent way to strengthen the pathway of homework completion and success for more students who would respond to this type of approach (Hong & Rowell, 2002).

Generally, researchers found positive relationships between homework and achievement, and between parent involvement in homework and student attitude about school. Bryan and Nelson (1994) found that homework completion is related to the extent to which a family values homework and views obstacles and to the frequency of a teacher's feedback and a teacher's attitude toward a student and his/her ability to work with the parents. Unfortunately, due to the huge amount of pressure most school districts are under to reach high academic achievement levels, homework time is continuing to climb. Numerous parents claim their students need to give up their extracurricular activities such as piano lessons and sports due to there not being time, which affects their state of happiness. Still other parents claim it teaches responsibility, time management,

and the skill of prioritizing. Although, to compensate, many students are losing out on sleep (Denny, 2000).

### **Conflicting Research**

It is quite obvious, from research and popular opinion, that an enormous number of experts and parents are complaining about elementary school pupils having too much homework, complaining it invades on family time and activities outside of school. John Buell and Etta Kralovec go as far as saying, “If homework were a prescription drug, the Food and Drug Administration would long ago have demanded its recall—especially for children of elementary school age.” They claim the benefits of homework do not outweigh the injustices it seems to cause on a daily basis (Curriculum Review, 2000, p. 3).

However, other experts and parents (Bryan & Nelson, 1994) debate that the amount is sufficient and it teaches children life skills as well as encouraging self-discipline, good study habits, and allowing the parent a role in his/her child’s education by guiding and monitoring the child’s progress. Some feel their students are not challenged enough and need more (Denny, 2000). Many researchers also describe it as an extension of the school day where students are able to really examine new concepts taught that day (Paschal, Walberg, & Weinstein, 1985).

However, many opponents argue that homework results in an overexposure to academics and limits time for leisure and other community

activities (Bursuck, Cumbland, Epstein, Followay, & Roderique, 1994). Harris Cooper, a psychologist at the University of Missouri, analyzed more than 100 studies and feels that these numerous studies found that the effect of homework on achievement is very small, if any, at the elementary level (cited in Begley, 1998). On the other hand, Judy Taccogna, director of the Education Sector at the Search Institute in Minneapolis found numerous studies showing students who consistently complete six or more hours of homework per week, score higher grades. They also had lower involvement with drugs and experienced better, overall, mental health (cited in Meisner, 2002).

After Cooper collected information on students grades six through twelve, he found completed homework positively affected students' academic achievement levels, concluding that it does have a reason to be a part of sixth grade through higher education. Even so, homework, if unbalanced, can lead to negative consequences (cited in Begley, 1998). Julian Betts, of the University of California, San Diego agrees that homework does not show academic achievement results until middle school. After monitoring 3,000 seventh and tenth graders, he found that if a seventh grader were given just 15 minutes of math homework per evening consistently through eleventh grade, that he would be a full year ahead in mathematics, in comparison to another student that did not (cited in Begley, 1998).

The explanation for why elementary grades do not see the same “payoff” is because it is a tougher task to have these students complete imaginative, focused, and substantive assignments which are the type of assignments needed to facilitate learning, explains Lyn Corno, of Columbia’s University Teachers College (cited in Begley, 1998). Although he recognizes that during elementary years, there should be a good foundation laid so students are ready for their middle and high school years. “The theory is that assignments given in high school relate more directly to school curriculum and become more challenging” (Corno, 1996, p. 28).

### **Student Perception**

Interestingly enough the field is not exceedingly wide in regards to how students feel about homework. Cooper, Greathouse, and Lindsay (1998) did find that parental attitudes regarding homework are transmitted to their children and do affect their education.

A study completed by Hong (1998) compared 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders in the areas of: preferred homework style, self perceived homework achievement, and attitude found that each child’s homework style determined their value of homework and success at it. Many parents seem to be unaware of their child’s style and therefore do not always provide the best means for homework completion (cited in Hong & Le, 2000). If these styles are met, Hong (1998)

states that an achievement in school and an improvement in homework can be attained.

Rosenberg (1998) conducted a study involving students with learning disabilities and did find that structure and clear directions regarding assignments seem to affect these students positively and successfully. However, a connection between homework and academic achievement has yet to be proved. Klingner and Vaughn (1999) also discovered that students with learning disabilities had strong feelings on how they wanted to be taught and can learn best. They frowned upon the idea of different amounts of or a different style of homework from their peers. They wanted to be judged with the same grading criteria as well and wanted assignments that were clearly explained, not altered.

At the collegiate level, a professor was concerned about the lack of retention his students had for his taught material. So, he made homework an important part of his course, as it was not before. He did find that clear and direct assigning of consistent homework can enhance a pupil's performance and focus the key points of the instructor's teaching. However this study credited this academic increase to students understanding the lectures better (Dudley & Shawver, 1991).

Bryan and Nelson (1994) collected data from fourth graders to eighth graders regarding their practices, perceptions, and opinions of homework. They found that 37% of students in regular classes found homework "dull and boring."

Junior high students were also found more likely to say homework is “dull and boring” than elementary students. In regards to if they learned a lot from homework, students had a midrange rating to that response.

In 1989, Chen and Stevenson found out that first and second graders indication of homework enjoyment was a significant predictor of school liking. They also interviewed fifth graders and found the liking rating of homework to be the same as the first and second graders, a 2.5 out of a 5 point scale, however their reasons for spending time on homework did not indicate that they saw the value rather that their parents wanted them to do it. (Chen & Stevenson, 1989).

Leone and Richards (1989) conducted a time sampling over one week collecting data from boys and girls varying from fifth to ninth grade and found that homework was perceived more negatively than all other activities. They also found it to be looked at even more negatively when completed alone.

Then in 1997, Warton interviewed second, fourth, and fifth grade students finding that there was definitely an age-related shift to understanding the responsibility of homework.

Robinson, Silver, and Strong’s (1995) research helped to explain a student’s perception of homework as viewing a relationship that can be advanced by the teacher and the student together. Since, students do not feel that teachers need only their knowledge and teachers are busy getting through the curriculum, time to nurture such a relationship is illogical. Ash, Brown, Campione, Gordon,

Nakagawa, and Rutherford (1993) tried to cultivate this relationship by using a “jigsaw” strategy with inner city children. In this strategy, peers are needed to help you figure out what your piece “of the puzzle” means and vice versa. So the relationship now is opened up to peers who can fulfill that role, rather than just the teacher. Elizabeth Cohen (1994) also used this strategy by building reciprocal groups made up of students with different talents and abilities. They needed to use these talents to work on a project together. This significantly improves motivation, reading, and writing.

Further research does show that homework will not fulfill its role in developing a pupil’s skills, time management, and learning until the student views it in a more favorable light. A better but challenging approach would be to move from rigid homework policies to terms that allow educators to show students that homework is truly an opportunity to learn across home and school contexts. Until this happens, homework’s purpose will continue to be misunderstood by students and will not be valued and enjoyed. Instead, it will continue to be an unpopular, solitary activity (Warton, 2001).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Design of the Study**

#### **Purpose**

**The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework.**

#### **Research Question**

What is the relationship between sixth graders' academic achievement levels and their perception of homework?

### **Methodology**

#### **Subjects**

Forty-two sixth graders from seven different public suburban schools participated in the research. There was a representation of two high, two medium, and two low academic achieving students from each of the schools encompassed in the study. This ranking was representative of each student's global, academic, achievement level.

#### **Materials**

The materials for the study included:

- ◆ A bank of interview questions

## **Procedures**

Interviews were individually conducted between a home based, sixth grade teacher and six students, at each of the seven schools. Interviewers utilized the bank of pre-scripted interview questions. These were conducted during the month of February 2003. Each interviewee did not have the interviewer for any academic subject, so results were NOT influenced by a student or teacher bias.

## **Analysis of Data**

The data was analyzed qualitatively and organized so that percentages aided in the finding of a definite, common relationship among the three groups and their perceptions of homework.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results of the Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework.

#### Null Hypothesis

There is no definite relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework. Below are the data from this study (H=high academic achievement A=average academic achievement, L=low academic achievement).

**Question #1: Do you receive homework on a daily basis? If so, why do you think that your teachers assign you homework?**

**YES (proves understanding of why HW is assigned)**

To help kids get smarter	A, A, L, L, L
To help review skills from the day in hopes of a better understanding	H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, A, A, A, A, A, L, L
Some of the stuff doesn't get done in class...assign remainder of lesson for homework in order to keep with the schedule	A, A
Help study and get better on tests	H, H, A, L
To help us do things on our own	H, H

So you don't forget the information you learned	L
He can see what we're doing wrong and fix it	A, A
<b>NO (proves understanding of why HW is assigned)</b>	
So you can learn	L
-----	
<b>YES (shows student is unclear as to why HW is assigned)</b>	
To torture us	H
I don't know	H
<b>NO (shows student is unclear as to why HW is assigned)</b>	
Not really	H, L

*Percentage of students that see reasoning for homework:*

**HIGH: 80 %      AVERAGE: 100%      LOW: 89%**

*Percentage of students that are unclear on reasoning for homework:*

**HIGH: 20%      AVERAGE: 0%      LOW: 11%**

**Question # 2: Do you like receiving assignments to complete for homework? Explain.**

**INDIFFERENT**

It depends on what the assignments are      H, H, H, H, L

-----

**NO**

Because it takes up time and you want to do other things when you get home      *H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, L, L, L, L*

Don't like doing homework      *A*

It's boring      *A, L, L (sometimes hard)*

I don't want to worry about receiving detention for late homework      *L*

---

**YES**

Sometimes when I don't understand, I have notes to help me      *A*

It teaches me and helps me figure out what I need to work on      *H*

Gives me something to do      *H, A*

It depends on the due date of the assignment      *L*

It doesn't bother me      *A*

***Percentage of students that enjoy receiving homework:***

***HIGH: 13%    AVERAGE: 17%    LOW: 0%***

***Percentage of students that do NOT enjoy receiving homework:***

***HIGH: 87%    AVERAGE: 75%    LOW: 100%***

***Percentage of students that are indifferent:***

***HIGH: 0%                    AVERAGE: 8%                    LOW: 0%***

**Question #3: Do you consistently complete your homework on time in all subjects? What is your main reason for completing or not completing your assignments on time?**

**YES:**

To get a good grade *H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, L, L*

To prevent from getting into trouble *A, A, L*

Has time at school and home to complete it *H*

No home privileges *H, H, L*

Feel like it and parents brought student up that way *H*

---

**NO**

Sometimes leave it at school or forget to do it *H, A, A, L, L, L*

Sometimes can't find it or not enough time *H*

Do not feel like doing it *A (too hard), L, L*

Due to too many assignments due on the same day *H*

***Percentage of students that complete their homework on time:***

**HIGH:80%      AVERAGE: 75%      LOW: 44%**

***Percentage of students that do NOT complete their homework on time:***

**HIGH:20%      AVERAGE: 25%      LOW: 56%**

**Question #4: Do you feel that you would do just as well without having homework? Explain your answer.**

**YES**

I think I can do better without it H, H,  
*H ( more time to study what I need to), L*

Homework is a review and I would still review if homework wasn't assigned H

By night I forget what I learned and homework is too hard to complete L

It's just extra stuff to do A (*math not graded*), L

Everything on homework is already taught in class H, H, A, A, A,  
L, L

Homework is always easy H

Already does well overall in school H, A

Wouldn't be so pressured L

Some things you can find out from other people H

---

**NO**

No particular reason A

You'll forget what you learned A, A

Homework helps you learn what you don't understand so you can ask in school H, H, H, A, A, A, L, L

Sometimes kids don't learn just from the lesson H, H, H, A, L

***Percentage of students that feel would do just as well without homework assigned:***



**Question #6: Do you feel completing your homework on a daily basis can affect the type of grades you receive? If so, in what way?**

**YES:**

It can bring them up or down since homework counts on your grade

*H, H, H, H, H, H, H, H, A, A, A, A, A, A, A, L, L, L, L, L, L*

Helps you know material better when it comes to tests

*H, H, H, H, H, H, A, L*

Provide practice and more information

*L, L*

Since I go over it with the class, I learn more

*A, A, A*

-----  
**NO:**

Doesn't affect grade

*H, L*

***Percentage of students that complete homework due to improving the overall grade:***

***HIGH: 53% AVERAGE: 67% LOW: 60%***

***Percentage of students that complete homework to improve their overall knowledge and use it as a practice tool:***

***HIGH: 40% AVERAGE: 33% LOW: 30%***

***Percentage of students that feel homework does NOT affect their grades:***

***HIGH: 7% AVERAGE: 0% LOW: 10%***

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement level of sixth graders and their perception of homework.

#### Conclusion

Although there was no serious relationship between the students' attitudes, the study does demonstrate some interesting findings. For example, it was interesting to see that the highest academic achievement group scored the highest percentage of students that were unclear on the reasoning behind having homework assigned. Some of them even replying with a mere, "I don't know" to a response encompassing the idea that "teachers wanted to torture us." You would think those responses to be more characteristic of a low achieving student. However, high academically achieving sixth graders scored a somewhat high 20% compared with only 11% of low achieving students not understanding the concept. On the flip side, it was also interesting to see that the students in the average range fully understood (100%), for differing reasons, why homework was assigned. Overall, there were quite a variety of students with varying abilities answering that homework is assigned to help review skills from the day in hopes of a better understanding of the material.

Although it seems to be an obvious question, most students do NOT enjoy receiving homework. It was interesting to see an overwhelming 100% of low achieving students and 87% of high achieving students agree to that answer. Although, 25% of average achieving students and 13 % of high achieving students actually like or do not mind receiving homework. Some of their reasons included “giving them something to do” or overall “not bothering them.” I thought it was important to note that NO low achieving students enjoy homework although one did say that it depended on the due date of the assignment. This low achieving student appreciated it when homework was not due the very next day. Also, the majority of all sixth graders interviewed did not like receiving homework because it takes up their time and they would like to do other things when they get home, such as sports or playing with their friends.

Most students were motivated to complete their assignments on time in all subjects because they wanted to get a good grade. Eight of those students were high academic achievers, seven were average, and two were low academic achievers. Three high performing students claimed their parents had a role in the fact that their homework must be done before home privileges would be allowed while only one low performing student answered the same way. The most popular reason for not doing homework was due to forgetting or leaving it at school. Only three students (one average and two low) felt that the work was too hard or they just did not feel like doing it. It was interesting to see that 80% of

high achieving students and 75 % of average achieving students complete their homework on time while 56% of low achieving students do NOT!

Question #4 seemed to help build a case as well due to the fact that 67% of low achieving students felt they would do just as well in school without homework assigned. Some of their reasons included “forgetting what was learned by the evening and homework becoming too tough to complete” or “feeling that they could just do better without the hassle of it.” However, students that were in the 33% range of students who did NOT feel they would do well without homework recognized the fact that sometimes they do not learn everything in the lesson taught that day. Furthermore, homework helps them understand what they still are having a hard time with, so they have an opportunity to ask the teacher in school on the following day. Almost as impressive as the percentage of low achieving students was the 60% of high achieving students that also feel homework is not necessary for them. It seemed that the low and high achieving students were almost in agreement instead of showing a discrepancy. Average ability students were near split while 58 % of them felt that homework was a necessary component in order to do well in school.

It was worthy of note to see five higher achieving students feel that the grades they received were only even with what most kids received while their teacher felt they were a higher academic achieving student. Likewise, it was remarkable to see 75% of low achieving students viewing their academic

achievement level higher than what the teacher viewed it as. However, 100% of the students that were of average ability viewed themselves as just that.

Lastly, a slight combined 17% of students interviewed felt that homework did not affect their grade at all while most students feel the main reason homework can affect your grade is because it counts towards it. Three students of average ability felt that when homework is gone over with the class the next day, they learn more while two low achieving students appreciated the practice and extra information homework provides. This was by far the question that all three groups agreed the most on indicated by a close percentage on the reasoning.

In conclusion, although I knew most kids disliked receiving homework, I was surprised that there was not more of a relationship between each group however there was mostly agreement among the students on the major questions independent of their academic achievement levels.

### **Implications for the Classroom**

I feel that although most students seem to understand the rationale behind giving homework, we as teachers have to continue to provide that understanding. I also believe that as teachers, we need to see that all students are able to share in this understanding. The idea of a jigsaw puzzle technique, where each student is in charge of a different piece of information for his group gives a more meaningful experience to each student involved. This way they are not one of

thirty with the same answer. Instead, they are they only one and carry the unique responsibility of reporting to a group. Realistically, I do not feel this type of assigning homework is always feasible however it is good to try and do at least 25% of the time to start. This helps give students who normally do not feel that connection to their homework a different way of looking at their individual role.

I feel that meaningful homework is important and all homework assigned should only be assigned if it will be discussed. Otherwise, I firmly feel that it is a waste for our students to complete and introduces negative homework behaviors such as cheating.

The last component that cannot be overlooked is the home school connection. Although this day in age, many teachers do not have the parental support in this area, I do believe we need to try and build a path to it. I feel parents are a key component to a student's academic well being while families need to feel that schools respect their family time as well. I never was a proponent of no homework at the fourth and fifth grade level but since an overwhelming amount of research shows it does not make a difference until middle school, I think we should take advantage of that. It would also be a wonderful way to show families that we respect life outside of school.

## **Implications for Future Research**

I think homework is an issue that has evolved again and again depending on what the fire is. Sometimes it is a national academic race with world powers, or challenging newly implemented state assessments. However, it is important to get every student to perform to their highest ability level. I think the key to that is a state based curriculum, phenomenal teachers, and homework that allows student to make connections to the objective that was taught. Originality is called for when we try and decide how to go about this challenge. But, I feel that it would be very interesting to do some more research on whether careful consideration to what homework assignments are given and how that would affect students who do not complete homework on a consistent basis. Putting a little more meaning and pressure on their role should encourage them to be more involved.

I would also like to see a study first hand where an elementary teacher (K-5) does not assign homework and the effect on the students. Although, I feel the concept is a great one, how do you convince teachers and parents that practice DOESN'T make perfect? Or perhaps homework outside of the K-5 school day is not included in "perfect practice".

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## APPENDIX A

### *Sixth Grade Homework Perception Interview Sheet*

**Directions to Interviewer:** Please fill in the basic information below right on THIS form. Attached are the interview questions. Please write down all the answers to the questions in the space provided after each question. If possible please audiotape all six of your interviews. Thank you very much for your time and efforts as I complete my thesis!

**School District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer's School Position** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee's First Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Please write down the interviewee's last initial, also, if you have any double first names.)

Interviewee's Global Academic Achievement Level: (Please circle one!)  
(This should be a child's GPA or if not available, the teacher who delivers the most instruction to this student will need to be consulted to select an achievement level grouping.)

<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
(88% - 90%)	(75% - 87%)	(74 % and below)

**Interviewee's Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Interviewee's Birthday:** \_\_\_\_\_

(The following interview questions *cannot* be asked by at teacher who delivers any type of academic instruction to the student, so results are not thrown off.

Please encourage the student to be as honest as possible in all of his/her responses.)

**QUESTIONS:**

- 1.) Do you receive homework on a daily basis? If so, why do you think that your teachers assign you homework?
  
- 2.) Do you like receiving assignments to complete for homework? Explain.
  
- 3.) Do you consistently complete your homework on time in all subjects? If you do not, what is your main reason for not completing your assignments? If you do, what is your main reason for completing your assignments?
  
- 4.) Do you feel that you would do just as well without having homework? Explain your answer.
  
- 5.) Do you feel the grades you receive overall in school are higher than most kids, even with most kids, or lower than most kids in the sixth grade?
  
- 6.) Do you feel completing your homework on a daily basis can affect the type of grades you receive? If so, in what way?