PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND HOMEWORK COMPLETION LEADS TO
STUDENT SUCCESS

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to better understand why students were not completing their homework assignments which was the main reason so many of them failed. The study was conducted for one semester to understand the reasons students were not completing daily homework assignments. Students volunteered to be included in monthly cogenerative dialogue secessions, held before school, during lunch period and after school. The teacher had the questions which were addressed in the cogenerative dialogues in advance. The results of the study indicated that homework completion and parental involvement has major impacts on the success of the students in class. This research allowed the researching to professionally develop by altering several classroom managing styles.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a process which can be accomplished in multiple ways and can occur beyond the classroom. Some high school students are under the impression that school is the only place where the educating process occurs. Some students who have this mentality, often times do not complete homework regularly. Students explained in cogenerative dialogues that they return to school with incomplete homework due to the numerous responsibilities they have to attend to upon arriving home from school. There are also students who do not complete homework because they choose not to.

My current school has faced problems with students failing a subject in part because students do not complete homework. Although students are warned about their declining grades, many times students do not want to face the facts and complete the work which is required by them. Teachers have noticed that students perform well on in class and alternative assessments.

Being a small high school the need to develop strong relationships with students
is encouraged. In this paper, three research questions will be answered; (1) How does completion of daily homework assignments affect students' progress in class? (2) Does completion of homework assignments promote higher test scores? (3) Does parental involvement increase the homework completion rate? A brief overview of Mastery Charter High School (MCHS) and an explanation on what teachers can do to have students successfully complete or attempt their homework assignment on a daily basis through the use of cogenerative dialogues is also provided.

Current research indicates that homework completion has a positive affect on students' progress in class (Reinsch & Wambsganss, 1994). This research indicated that class participation affected student performance based on the technicality of the class. Further research by Pratton & Hales (1986) showed that “active participation” lead to students performing significantly better on multiple choice assessments. Students tend to be more, attentive, self motivated and knowledgeable when they have their homework completed. Attaching a point value for class participation has seemed to encourage participation without teacher encouragement. In a study by Balli, Demo, and Wedman, they found that parental involvement does help students meet with completion of homework. Their finding also revealed that students were much more motivated and comprehended material when reinforced by parents at home. They also came find that parent involvement showed the most improvement in reading skills.

The researcher completed a bachelor's degree in science education. Upon graduating, he began teaching for the Philadelphia School District (PSD) where he completed his student teaching. Having worked for three months in the PSD, he decided to further his education by attending graduate school. He attended a local
university where he finished his masters in art education. Seeing the quality of teaching done in some of the classroom of his colleagues in the PSD, he decided to stay in the district. Some of the major courses the writer has taught include Intro. to College Physics, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physical Science, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and Pre-Calculus.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several articles have been reviewed prior to beginning this research to provide insight. Zaremba & Dunn (2004), found that having a daily class participation grade students felt it was useful and it made them feel responsible for in class participation. Zaremba & Dunn (2004), found that active class participation improved public speaking skills, class cohesion, and helped the teacher by informing them the material students did not understand. A self-evaluation was constructed by Zaremba & Dunn (2004), in an effort to assist the learners comprehend to what extent the students participated in class. This measure was a formative assessment because students assessed their verbal and nonverbal class participation upon the completion of the class meeting.

The assessment procedure was very straight forward. Students were given a self-evaluation which they completed and submitted to the instructor. When an instructor did not agree with the students’ grading, instructors/he changed the ratings, wrote reasons to support the rating and returned it to the students at the meeting of the next class.

Students who were involved in this study felt the self-evaluations were very helpful to them in that they “stimulated the reading assignments,” Students felt encouraged to participate in class discussions, students also felt encouraged to attend classes regularly. The self-evaluations helped students who were shy, by keeping them
aware of the participation and held them accountable.

Many times students tend to invest their efforts when there are points associated to assignments. Typically, students who function at the low academic achievement level, have difficulty with appreciating knowledge. Students who function at the low academic level need extrinsic motivation to reach an educator’s goal of acquiring knowledge. (Pratton & Hales, 1986)

Research carried out by Reinsch and Wambsganss indicated that based on the technicality of the class it varied whether class participation directly affected an individual student. Reinsch and Wambsganss were working with undergraduate students. The study indicated that the class participation affected the class as a whole not just individual students. The findings of Reinsch and Wambsganss (1925) tells us that students who were involved in class discussions preformed better than those who did not.

Reinsch and Wambsganss found that when the undergraduates were awarded credit for class participation. They were motivated to take part in and active conversation in class, which resulted in better performance on assessments. Based on their findings on the research they conducted Reinsch and Wambsganss state “the only statement we can make based on these results is that active participation may be beneficial for students in certain types of classes.” (p.33 1994) The dynamics of the class is what allows for the active participation to occur within a class. Often students are reserved during class discussions due to them feeling insecure of how their classmates will respond to their contribution.

An article by Balli, Demo, and Wedman, highlights that parental involvement in the school community has an effect in various ways. Of the families included in the
research, almost all of them had started their children in Head Start. Head Start research has shown positive impact of the program and set the stage for parental involvement. Balli, Demo, and Wedman indicate parental support does help students perform significantly better in school. This study revealed that students who are self motivated to academically perform better and they are more likely to be self involved in extra curricular activities. Those who lack the self motivation have the extrinsic motivation from their parents. The parental involvement can be broadened in the form of being an active member of the school’s parent association committee or simply encouraging their children to do better in school, at home. Parents whose children were enrolled in Head Start, were accustomed to devoting time to their children at home. Parents who were engaged in the routine of working with their children, made the parents more likely to be active in their child’s education throughout the upper grades. (Epstein, 1987) This research investigated four main areas. The first question examined the effects of different prompts on reported levels of family involvement with mathematics homework. The second examined family reported levels of involvement with mathematics homework compared to levels of involvement with other homework. It was also investigated that effects of family involvement on student achievement on a mathematics post-test. Relationships among selected family varied, family involvement and student achieve was also examined.

Taking all variables into consideration, the findings based on this research reveal that two parent families are more likely to help with homework than single parent families; this is highly due to that simple fact that many people are talented in different ways. A skill one parent lacked in, the other parent compensated for and the reverse. A national study revealed that students are more likely to dropout when parents are not
involved in their educational career. Results also revealed that parents’ educational and socioeconomic resources are good predictors of student achievement and success.

Hales and Pratton (1986) included twenty, fifth grade classes. Five trained participating teachers taught a lesson to four classes and two of the teachers promoted active participation and two did not. Lessons were recorded with a camcorder and/or audio cassette recorder. Throughout this research it has been seen that some teaching methods make a difference. This article also highlights researchers who have studied specific behaviors of teachers and students. In 1981, two researchers, Brophy and Evertson found that teachers presented demonstrations followed immediately by student practice and feed back. It was also found that teachers modeling combined with prompting, promoted student achievement. Having conducted this research it was found that feedback, flexible teaching style, strategies of questioning, structuring activities, clarity of presentation, task-oriented teaching, student rewards, teacher enthusiasm and class climate all have a direct effect on student learning. This article brought up many interesting points to promote class participation with in a classroom.

Pratton states that students learn the same regardless of the teaching environment. Pratton also goes on to say that teaching methods have an enormous impact on the learning that goes on. Also, students who receive frequent feedback are more likely to participate than those who receive minimal to none feedback from the teacher. In Pratton’s research he came to learn that by showing the students what they are required to do independently, they are more likely to do it with success. As students face difficulties along the process of completing a task at hand, prompting them with questions secured their success. By modeling for the students, they have a visual understanding of how to complete what they are being asked to complete.
Cogenerative dialogues we used to effectively collect data from the students who voluntarily participated in the study. Similar to the research conducted by LaVan and Beers (in press), the researcher used cogenerative dialogues to provide an atmosphere where students felt comfortable to share their thoughts with their teacher. LaVan and Beers have written that “cogenerative dialogues provided opportunities to talk with the students in a relaxed manner and to gain perspectives about factors affecting their learning of science.” (p. 183). Cogenerative dialogues were used to secure the accuracy of data collecting from the students involved in the research.

METHODS

Mastery Charter High School (MCHS)

The teacher population is approximately 35 white teachers, 25 African – Americans, 2 Latino/a and 1 Indian. Approximately 435 students are enrolled in the school. Most of the students who attend MCHS live in the city of Philadelphia, and ride public transportation to and from school. The social-economic class of the families the students came from were lower middle class to middle class. MCHS had its first graduation last year and 98% of the students went onto higher education. (college, university, trade school) MCHS had the entire senior class (100%) graduate last year. In 2003-04 year we made AYP. Approximately 36% of students were proficient in Math and 44% in Reading (the cutoff was 35% Math and 45% Reading). The results for 2004-05 are not yet complete; however, our PSSA scores were proficient in 35% Math, 45% in Reading.

Students are required to take 3 classes per semester (math, humanities, and a science class), and 6 classes per academic school year. Students are also required to score proficient or advanced on the PSSA exam in the 11th grade, complete an
internship, senior project and an ex-habitation night project. The grading system at MCHS is not typical to that of other high schools within the district. The grading is based on mastery (M=76% or higher) and incomplete (I=75% or lower).

The internship program at MCH, serves as the community service project during the students’ junior or senior year. In order to be rostered and placed as an intern, all students are required to successfully complete a class which develops students professionally to enter their internship. Since MCHS is a charted school within the PSD, the internship is a community service requirement for all students. To be selected by one of the partnered business within the city, student must go through an interview process.

The students who attend MCHS reside in the city of Philadelphia. Students are required to apply as 8th graders for 9th grade enrollment. Students are selected via a lottery process where they are called in for an interview with a teacher, administrator, or a current student. After the interview, the student and the family is contacted on the acceptance or the rejection of the application.

MCHS is affected by the state, since it is a charted school with the PSD. The MCHS Central Management Office (CMO) has successfully raised sufficient funds to own one of the two buildings MCHS currently operates out of. The CMO is continually taking on more schools within the district where student progress is not being meet by the current staffing under the supervision of the PSD. CMO appreciated the insight from the teachers in regards to major decisions they are required to make. Decisions in school are made by the principal with insight from the CEO. Teachers are asked for their input through the School Meeting Committee (SMC). Charter schools were started
approximately nine years ago. There has been a continual growth with charter schools especially in major metropolitan districts.

The students meet in cogenerative dialogue sessions which lasted approximately thirty minutes. The four questions which guided the sessions are listed below.

1. Why don’t students complete homework?
2. What can teachers to do help students complete their homework?
3. Does parental involvement help students to complete their homework?
4. How does homework completion have an effect on students’ in class?

Description of Class

The teacher did not have a difficult time in selecting which group of students to select for the research. The class comprised of nine males and seven females, of the sixteen students, four are juniors and nine of the students he has enrolled in his class have much more responsibilities then a typical high school student.

After selecting the class, students were informed of the study and also notified of how they could be contributing to the study. Students volunteered to be active participants in the study. Students were looking forward to taking part in the cogenerative dialogue secessions. The teacher-researcher did not reveal the details of the cogenerative dialogues. The teacher just stated that they would be held before school, after school and during lunch.

Actual data collection of passing and failing students began in September and carried out for the semester. The cogenerative groups meet a total of five times. The first was simply a practice secession for students to get comfortable and be able to speak what was truly on their mind. The first cogenerative dialogue was conducted to assure regular attendance for the remaining cogenerative dialogue secessions. The
remaining four cogenerative dialogues were guided by a focus question which can be found in appendix A. For the last four cogenerative dialogues, light refreshments were provided for students who volunteered their time. Two of the three groups had five students and the third group had six students. Considering that MCHS has a very strict guidelines as to the number of absences a student can have the cogenerative dialogue groups were well attended and the students maintained the same groupings. The groups were well maintained due to the time students were willing to attend the cogenerative dialogue secessions. All the students were active participants throughout the research. The students who did not take part in the research were not allowed to participate upon their parents’ request. Notes were taken by the researcher during cogenerative dialogue secessions. The notes which were taken can be found in appendix B.

RESULTS

As students attended the cogenerative dialogue secessions, they began to understand the importance of homework completion. It was surprising to see the drastic increase in the number of students passing during the first month. The increasing in the number was due to two main reasons, 1- mailing of interim reports cards and 2- students were walking away from the cogenerative dialogue secession feeling good about the class and their relationship with their teacher. After conducting the trial cogenerative dialogue secessions, students returned to class talking among themselves about how they felt towards the secessions. A group of students were talking about how they felt comfortable talking about issues that they were being affected by. The first set of data does not reveal the students’ true potential of their academic ability, considering the data for the months of October, December and January. The teacher
had not altered any form of instruction being provided to the class which he taught for
the first half of the academic semester.

As shown in figure 3, there is less of a gap between the two groups of students
which leaves much room for improvement to close the semester. The decline in the
number of students passing from October to November is largely due to the “holiday
fever”, which came around towards the end of the month. This type of trend was
common in the personal teaching experience of the researcher.

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**Figure 1**

Number of Students Passing to the Number of Students Failing
in September

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<th>Fail</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>9</td>
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</table>

**Figure 2**

Number of Students Passing to the Number of Students Failing
in October

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<th>Fail</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
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After having interpreted the results, it was clear that the cogenerative dialogue session which was conducted in September had a positive impact on the students'
progress and outlook on the class. Each cogenerative dialogue session focused on a single question with three groups. Each group met five times for the cogenerative dialogues.

The researching teacher observed 100% participation of the students who attended the cogenerative dialogue session. Each student had verbally communicated their thoughts during the cogenerative dialogue sessions. The teacher was very pleased to see such efforts students put forth to be included in the research. Students who typically did not speak in class, spoke during the cogenerative dialogues and took responsibility in making sure their class mates remembered their appointments. Observing special education students engage in a process and do it well, motivated other students to do even better then they were typically doing. The cogenerative dialogues brought out a side of the students that the teacher had never seen both academically and socially. This gave the researching teacher something to be proud of accomplishing.

After having all the students in one cogenerative dialogue, the researching teacher asked what the students though about the cogenerative dialogues. They responded by telling the teacher that they felt it was a great addition to the class. They went on to say cogenerative dialogues give them power and a voice to improve the class for the remainder of the academic semester. One student shared that the cogenerative dialogues allowed that student to develop a relationship with the teacher which allowed that specific student to engage herself to the teaching during class. Another student felt that all teachers at MCHS should hold cogenerative dialogues secessions. This student felt that cogenerative dialogues allowed for relationships to be
build among students and with the teacher.

The cogenerative dialogs were such a success that the motivated students to complete their homework for the following class. Also, students were very esthetic about the class as they entered the classroom because they understood the work and they were prepared. During the months of September and November, students' grades were low mainly due to students not completing their homework. By students not doing their homework, they were unmotivated to completing their assignments both in class and at home. On days when students did not complete their homework they tend to misbehave in class and distract others seated around them.

The researching teacher noticed an increase in the number of students who attended office hours during the months of October, December, and January. Students were attending before school and after school office hours to receive tutoring, reinforcing the content taught and to submit work. The students who attended office hours for tutoring began to see what they needed to do in class to understand the content taught. Many of the students needed to copy the notes accurately so the had an example worked out to guide them through their homework at home.

The teacher-researcher enjoyed the process of getting to learn about the students on a personal level. The positive comments made by the students during the cogenerative dialogues, were very rewarding. The negative comments helped the teacher to grow professionally. The researching teacher appreciated the changes the cogenerative dialogues brought to the class.

DISCUSSION
The findings of the research questions raised are clearly answered and supported by similar types of research conducted. Students have made it clear in their cogenerative dialogues that completion of daily homework assignments reinforced their understanding of the content covered in their classes. Students enjoyed attending class when they understood what was being covered. Students who completed daily assignments had a better comprehension of the material which resulted in better test scores. Children also were less likely to cause behavioral problems because they were engaged in the teaching and learning process. Students who were active learners during the delivery of a lesson in class, were more likely to understand the content. These students were also willing to help their classmates understand the material because they understood it. This gave students something to be proud of.

Homework completion does in fact promote higher test scores. Having administered regular classroom assessment and district mandated benchmarks to measure students’ progress, the research did indicate that daily homework completion resulted in students performing better on all types of assessments. As shown in figures 1 and 5, nine students had gone from I’s to M’s by completing daily assignments both in and out of class. The researching teacher overheard the students talking to one another about how easy the class was when they completed their homework. By completing homework assignments daily, students knew what they were weak in; therefore, they knew what they had to spend extra time understanding. After understanding the process of preparing for an assessment and completing daily homework assignments, students preformed much better in class. The researching teacher had noticed the amount of class participation and the willingness of students to
learn and help their classmates understand the content. The in-class environment had changed from lack of in-class participation to full participation and cooperation among the students.

There was a split when the question of parental involvement was discussed at the cogenerative dialogues. Half of the class reported that their parents are not involved in their educational career and half did. When the students were asked how they were admitted into the school, they realized that their parent were truly involved in their educational career. The students argued the fact that their parents were concerned when they were in the 9th grade. Now that they were upper classmen (11th and 12th graders) their parents were no longer involved in their educational career. Their parents felt they had become mature to make mature decisions. The students who claimed that their parents were not involved in their educational career, did not fully comprehend the definition of parental involvement. In some cases, the students were right in that they were very much on their own when it came down to their parent being active in their educational career. Many students who were included in this study were the older sibling who had to provide for their younger sibling(s). A small group of students were residing on their own where they had nobody older to watch over them. Students who were in this type of situation were motivated to perform well academically for a better future. Urban high school students are unfortunately placed into situations where they are required to take on responsibilities of adults due to various reasons (Cooper and Sherk, 1998). Some parents simply neglected to be involved in their child’s education. Once the students realized that their parents did not care they thought that their parents never asked them for their homework they would not bother
completing it, not considering the long or short term results of their decision. This type of parental neglect causes urban students to loose interest in their education and eventually results in the student dropout rate to increase. (Balli, Demo, and Wedman, 1998)

Students whose parents were involved in their educational career mainly asked if they had homework and if their child had completed it to the best of their ability. Some of these parents did attend parent/teacher conferences regularly. Some parents were also actively involved in their child’s educational career in that they requested weekly progress reports and also returned them with a signature to the classroom teacher. These parents also followed through with providing any private tutoring if their child needed it or by having their child attend office hours with the teacher. Parental involvement of any sort resulted in an academically disciplined child who preformed well on assessments.

CONCLUSION

Having conducted this research has allowed the researching teacher to become aware of the issues which surround high school students. Through the cogenerative dialogue secessions, the teachers and students were given an opportunity to carry a mature conversation around the main topic of low grades earned by students due to lack of homework completion in their classes. The students who were included in the study realized the effects of not completing their homework through their grades and disciplinary records.

The researching teacher is actively seeking ways in which he can professionally grow and provide a better learning environment for his future classes. Since this research has shown results in the improvement of student performance, these types of
cogenerative dialogues will be conducted with future classes in hopes to obtain positive results. Teachers will be offered the opportunity to conduct cogenerative dialogues in all of their classes as MCHS to build positive relationships and to spark the interest of the students to be successful in their classes. Parents will be required to attend parent/teacher conferences each semester to hold them accountable for their child's progress. When a student is admitted to MCHS, parents are required to sign a contract stating they will do “what ever it takes,” to secure their child’s education. With changes in the administration the during the academic school year, parents who have not been involved in their child’s educational career, will be held to the contract.
APPENDIX A:

- Why don’t students complete homework?
- What can teachers do to help students complete their homework?
- Does parental involvement help students to complete their homework?
- How does homework completion have an effect on students’ in class participation?
APPENDIX B:
The following are notes taken by the researcher during the different cogenerative dialogues.

Group A

- Why don’t students complete homework?
  - It’s not important
  - Other responsibilities—i.e. work & chores
  - After learning so much we shouldn’t have to do homework
  - Health issues – i.e. headaches, migraines
  - If students did not understand it in class so they don’t know how to do the homework.

- What can teachers do to help students complete their homework?
  - Have students stay after school
  - Nothing, if students don’t want to do it they are not going to.
  - Have office hours, guardian angel, homework seminar
  - Alternative assessment
  - Have positive outlook in class make assignments look helpful instead of like punishment

- Does parental involvement help students to complete their homework?
  - Yes, if parents ask you to do it and not force you to do so.

- How does homework completion have an effect on students’ in class participation?
When completed it has a positive effect because it helps students to participate and students feel good when they understand what is being discussed.
Group B

- Why don’t students complete homework?
  - Because there is too much to do.
  - Problems at home
  - Tired from a lot of work form other teachers
  - Other things that are more important

- What can teachers do to help students complete their homework?
  - Not assign so much homework
  - Allow class time to get started
  - Provide extra class time for help
  - Allow late/early submission of assignments for full credit
  - Homework seminar/ office hours/guardian angel/ AM tutoring
  - Lunch time tutoring.
  - Mandate office hours
  - Weekly progress report

- Does parental involvement help students to complete their homework?
  - Yes, my parents would encourage me to do it and they would help me also.

- How does homework completion have an effect on students’ in class participation?
  - Reinforces our understand
  - Re-teach what we didn’t understand the first time we were taught the material.
Group C

- Why do students not complete HW?
  - Too much is given
  - We have other responsibilities
  - Don’t feel like it
  - Distracted both the things that go on in our neighborhood
  - Not enough time
  - We have P/T or F/T jobs
  - Lack of skills
  - Assignment cannot be linked to concept

- What can teachers do to help students complete HW assignments?
  - Schedule time in school day
  - Last 30 min of each class
  - Assign less HW
  - Cover content before assigning HW
  - See student in office hours. Office hour is scheduled but students have to wait to see teachers
  - Don’t hold us for the entire hour b/c public transportation.
  - Allow student to schedule office hour meeting with teacher.

- Does parent involvement help in the HW completion process?
  - Its difficult for parents to be involved in the HW completion process
  - Parent lack the knowledge
  - Parents have multiple jobs
- Parents don’t feel like dealing with you after a 10 hour day
- Single parent families and the parent has too many other things to do around the house
- Parents are under the impression that it is not their responsibility to help with HW b/c we are in high school.
- Yes, b/c parents influence me positively
- Some students don’t pay their parents not mind.
- Parents don’t provide support but they get angry with us for bad grades
REFERENCES


