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The Effects of Homework on Students' Success in the Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of how students view homework and how completing homework can help students to succeed in the classroom.

The research occurred inside the classroom and is a reflection of the actual grading system used by the classroom teacher. The students have not been required to complete a large quantity of work outside the classroom in order to advance to their next level of education and are unfamiliar with the importance of practicing their skills beyond the time allotted in class.

The two classes included in the study are sixth grade, track three mathematics students. The first class has a total of twenty-eight students and the second class has sixteen students. In both classes is the regular classroom teacher, an AmeriCorps volunteer, and the RTI Specialist for sixth grade. The new grading system, including homework as a larger portion of their grade, was implemented during the third grading term.

Methods

The method under which this research was completed involved implementing a new classroom system, as well as several surveys. One of the surveys was administered by the classroom teacher and the results were shared with me, but not the actual surveys. I administered a survey questioning the students on homework specifically (figure 1).

The classroom system implemented consisted of a specific requirement for gaining points for homework. Each week the students were able to earn 20% of their points from Wednesday notes, 20% from a quiz on Friday, and 60% from IXL (mathematics computer program) practice. The notes and quiz were completed in coordination with one another, but the IXL practice was the students' responsibility. The students were able to practice approximately 42% of their computer practice in class, but were responsible for completing the remaining 58% on their own. The classroom instructor offered advisory time (during school) to practice, as well as after-school sessions.

Figure 1

- What kinds of homework have you had in your math classes?
 - IXL/ other computer practice
 - problems from the text book
 - multiple choice questions
 - word problems
 - ISTEP practice questions
 - Other:
- What kinds of homework do you usually have in other classes? (reading, short answer, multiple choice, etc)
- If you have homework, what kind do you prefer? (Do not put none; choose from what you are assigned; you may list more than one type)
- How often do you complete your homework?
 - Always
 - Sometimes
 - Never
- Do you feel like homework helps you :
 - Study?
 - Understand what you learned in class?
 - Practice your skills?
 - Other:

Results

Class 1

- First Term:
 - 48% had a decrease in letter grade
 - 14% had no change in letter grade
 - 28% had an increase in letter grade
- Second term:
 - 34% had a decrease in letter grade
 - 21% had no change in letter grade
 - 41% had an increase in letter grade (figure 2).

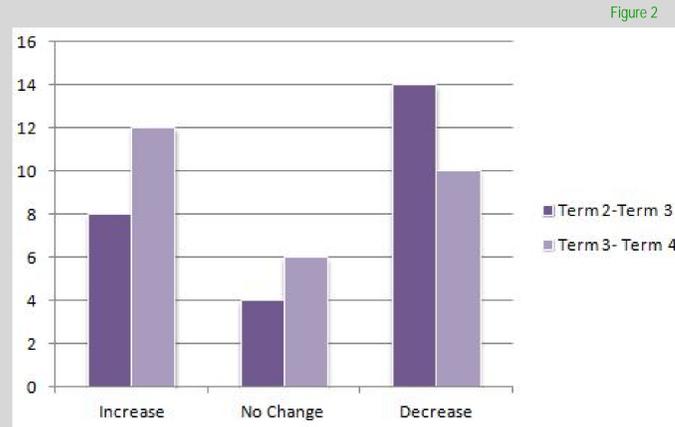
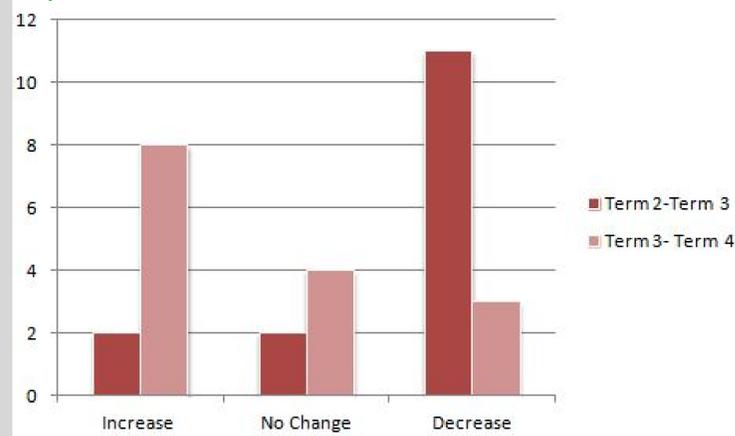


Figure 3

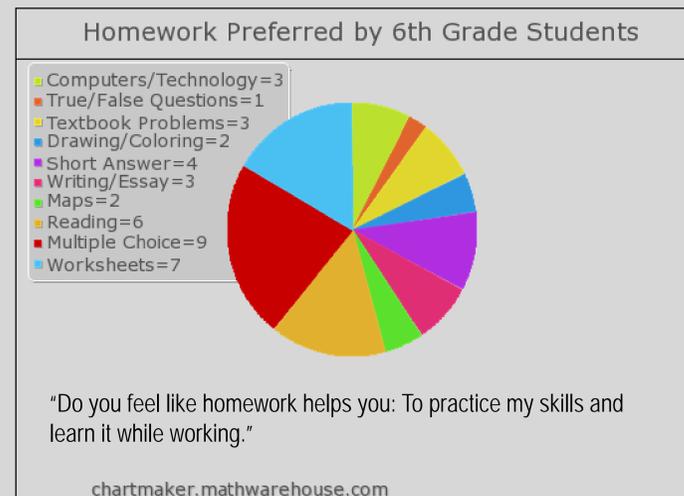


Class 2

- First Term:
 - 69% had a decrease in letter grade*
 - 13% had no change in letter grade*
 - 13% had an increase in letter grade*
- Second Term:
 - 19% had a decrease in letter grade*
 - 25% had no change in letter grade*
 - 50% had an increase in letter grade* (figure 3).

- *In accordance with the new system implemented in the class:
- an increase in a student's letter grade would indicate that they had performed the "assigned" work outside of the normally allotted classroom time
 - a decrease would indicate that they did not complete the "assigned" work outside of the normally allotted classroom time
 - no change in a letter grade would indicate that a portion of the "assigned" work was completed.
 - n= 44 students

Figure 4



Analysis

- The survey given to the sixth graders revealed their preferred methods of homework being administered, pictured in figure 4. Although most students wanted to indicate they preferred no homework, the highest numbers indicated that they preferred multiple choice questions and worksheets.
- 61% of the students indicated that they sometimes completed homework assigned to them
- 39% of students indicated that they always completed homework assigned to them
- 0% of the students indicated that they never completed homework assigned to them

Conclusion

- A smaller class size in Class 2 allowed them to receive more one-on-one attention.
- The larger size of Class 1 made it more difficult for the aides in the classroom to provide individualized assistance to each student quite as often.
- Because the "required" homework had a defined impact on the students' letter grade, 13% more students from Class 1 improved their letter grade by completing more homework and 37% more students did the same in Class 2.
- Many of the students worked very hard during class and were on task, but it was not until they received a grade report and saw that their letter grade was decreasing that they decided to make a change.
- After experiencing the change in their classroom routine and grades:
 - approximately 42% of students indicated that homework helps them understand what they learn in class
 - approximately 28% indicated that homework helped them practice their skills

Contact information

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