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How Homework Can Foster Equity and Motivation in the Classroom:

A Closer Look at What Effective and Inclusive Homework Entails

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Thesis Abstract

Homework practices and policies vary widely throughout education. The research on homework varies just as widely without conclusive findings regarding which homework practices are effective or inclusive for student learning. This case study explored two teachers who employed different homework practices and policies and what effect these homework implementations had on student motivation and participation when completing assignments. Both teachers were first interviewed to find what their practices, policies, and expectations were when it came to homework in their respective classes. Students' grades were then collected to determine whether each homework implementation was effective and inclusive. Finally, student interviews were conducted to find what students' expectations were of homework and what they found to be motivating when completing assignments. The data reported that a no homework policy wherein students are given time in class to complete assignments, but have the option to complete or refine these assignments at home was more effective for all students and inclusive for most social groups. Furthermore, student interviews revealed that they preferred the extrinsic motivation of completion grades and teacher feedback when completing assignments. Teachers need to keep in mind their students' expectations and needs when implementing assignments to ensure successful learning and participation of all students.

Keywords: equity, feedback, inclusive, independent practice, homework, motivation

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Chapter 1

Definition of Problem

As education focuses more and more on equity and access, the question of whether sending assignments home with students is equitable enters every educator's mind in some form or another. Additionally, the very topic of homework often triggers strong – often dichotomous – feelings in educators, students, and parents alike. And while there is an overabundance of research on the various facets of homework, there are mixed results on its benefits. Even still, the dilemma becomes that assigning homework assumes that all students have the same quantity and quality of time, resources, and support when completing assignments outside of the classroom.

Homework completion becomes substantially problematic as students enter adolescence. Balfanz, Herzog and Mac Iver (2007) explained that the challenges students are most likely to face during adolescence than at any other age, especially those in high-poverty areas, revolve around the issues of familial obligations and different types of peer pressures. While an adolescent's outside pressures, distractions, and lack of consequential thinking become more prevalent, their academic workload increases. Daniels (2011) points out that while a student in elementary school has only one teacher assigning homework, a student in middle or high school may have between four to eight teachers all of which may assign a significant amount of homework. This increase in workload comes at an untimely point in a student's cognitive development when adolescents' ability to make logical decisions and utilize consequential thinking is not yet fully developed (Chamberlin & Chambers, 2012).

As students are required to begin thinking about their futures (college, career, etc.), the stakes that education plays in one's life becomes high. This means that students are required to

take into consideration every academic decision they make and weigh the consequences that these decisions may have on their future academics, career, family, etc. Given the point in cognitive development that middle school and high school students are at, educators may be asking students to fulfill certain tasks that are not accessible for most adolescents, one of these tasks being certain types or amounts of homework.

When students are unable to or forget to complete an assignment, this can be viewed as personal failure and potentially alter a student's academic performance and motivation in a class (Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, & Ludtke, 2009). In other words, it is important to keep in mind that all students come with different backgrounds and at different points of development which requires teachers to be mindful of what they demand of their students during and after class in order to maintain students' motivation to learn (Haas, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Homework is a tradition that transcends the education system as we know it today. There are many different philosophies and purposes behind homework that different teachers have taken on and will practice throughout their careers (Brock, Lapp, Flood, Fisher, & Tao Han, 2007). Some use homework as an extension to a lesson or as a way for the student to practice a certain skill they presumably learned in class. Other teachers assign homework because it is synonymous with traditional schooling. Many are educated with homework being a part of their own school experience and, therefore, it has become embedded in their perception of what makes a successful teacher and learner. Yet as research in education is explored and published, many of these philosophies and practices come into question (Cooper, 2001).

Many educators advocate assigning homework because they feel they are requiring students to experience a similar obligation to that of the workplace and they, therefore, are

teaching the students the "reality" of being a functioning citizen of the workforce. This philosophy fails to examine how many students, particularly English Learners and low socioeconomic status students, are at a disadvantage and already exposed to a different reality (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007). Balfanz et al. also explain that English Learners are more likely to become disengaged and, consequently, dropout of school. This may be due to the fact that many of the "unique needs of these older EL students are even more overlooked than those of their younger peers" and so they are not as linguistically prepared to complete independent assignments as their peers (Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan as cited in Olson & Land, 2007, p. 272). When assigning these students daily homework, many of them become discouraged as they are without the time and resources to complete the homework independently and successfully.

This goes hand-in-hand with the next reason behind assigning homework, which is the anecdotal experience that when students complete their homework, it is assumed they are illustrating an effort and potential interest in being successful in a classroom. Because of this, for many educators, homework becomes a personal thing for many educators wherein the teacher feels slighted when a student neglects the assignments and gratified by those who do complete their work, inviting inequities in grading policies and feedback that become subjective rather than equitable.

Inconsistencies in grading and feedback may also stem from lack of time in the teacher's workload as well. Given that secondary teachers have large quantities of students' needs to keep in mind and meet when creating and grading homework assignments, time and resources for the teacher becomes an issue, which directly affects the student's motivation to put forth effort in their assignments. This can be seen in Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory when he explains that a

person must have a reasonable balance between the challenge and their skills and people must receive immediate and specific feedback in order to maintain happiness, which leads to motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When a student lacks the motivation to complete homework, this also has the potential to negatively affect the classroom environment. Without an objective feedback process and mindful creation of assignments, a teacher becomes much more subjective with inconsistent expectations. While these thoughts and inconsistencies may not be verbally addressed, they do not go unnoticed in the classroom and often put the teacher's credibility into question.

Furthermore, assigning homework can be problematic given the stage of development that the brain is at for an adolescent. Many adolescents in middle and high school have not developed their cerebrum, which is responsible for decision making (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991). This means that students will often lack the prioritizing skills that educators often demand of them. They are expected to put aside their extracurricular activities and social lives for the 30 minutes of homework that each of their four to eight teachers assigned each day. It is not practical and may not meet the socio-cultural-economic needs of the students (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991).

When a student receives homework that is necessary to the lesson and learning and has been well-thought out by the educator, there is investment and motivation to learn and be challenged. A student will, consequently, go beyond what they even thought they were capable of and maximize their thinking skills for this teacher. It is not difficult to assess when an educator has thought out their assignments and lessons and deserves credibility. While a student may not articulate what they are looking for, they notice the teacher's specificity in direction, the awareness of students' needs, whether there is a coherent unified concept amongst assignments,

the effort of the teacher to give immediate meaningful feedback, and whether there is transparency in the end goal. With these components, a student will find relevancy in their assignments and be successful.

Purpose of the Study

Homework has the capacity to create engaged learners or apathetic learners. There is much research that can lead the argument to doing away with homework such as that found by Eren and Henderson (2011) that states that there is no correlation between test scores and homework. Yet, there is also evidence that shows that homework can be meaningful and evoke critical thinking skills when done under the right circumstances. Approaches to assigning and providing feedback on homework is a practice that varies from teacher to teacher and the current research is inconclusive when finding effective homework practices at the middle school and high school levels.

Based upon the existing research and the evolving standards in education, the purpose of this study was to explore two research questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments? This study explored various practices at a North San Diego County high school to identify what effective homework practices might look like. The participants in this study include high school teachers who have different educations and experiences in education.

Preview Literature

The literature explores both obstacles and learning opportunities that homework poses to students. Within the obstacles, many students of low socioeconomic status or from minority groups are left to fend for themselves with homework as they lack the resources, capabilities, and

understanding to successfully complete assignments independently. This leaves a feeling of defeat in many of our youth that turns them off to learning and education. On the other hand, when a teacher assigns purposeful homework to students who feel prepared, there is greater opportunity to motivate students' inquiry and independence. The literature discussed in chapter two investigates possible contributors to inequities in the classroom, explores the research on the benefits and shortcomings of assigning homework, evaluates students' needs that should be taken into consideration when assigning homework, and considers the development of the adolescent brain how this effects student learning.

There is much debate over equity and access in education and its causes; one thing that becomes clear is that these inequities reference the discrepancies in academic accomplishment among varying ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and language abilities (Milner, 2013). Furthermore, Banks (2001) discusses principles that educators should consider when working in a multicultural setting with equity and access in mind.

Homework assignments have the potential to be meaningful as investigated by Haas (2008) who developed questions that educators should ask themselves as they plan their lessons and aligned assignments. Yet, there is also research that suggests that homework becomes frivolous, especially in the areas of English, history, science, as homework completion does not show any correlation to test scores (Eren & Henderson, 2011). As both sides of the argument are weighed, the definition of meaningful and purposeful homework becomes clearer.

Teachers often do not think about students with language barriers, learning challenges, or lack of resources/support at home and yet, collectively, they are a large number of the students in our classrooms. Bang (2012) discusses the hurdles non-English speaking students face when completing homework at home. According to Bang, "the assignments need to be tailored to

students' learning needs and their capacity to complete a given task" (2012, p. 3). Additionally, Sawyer, et al. (1996) discusses issues that students with learning disabilities encounter when trying to complete independent assignments. Much of the research points to creating assignments that can be modified for individual student needs.

In creating assignments for students, it also becomes important to keep in mind adolescent cognitive development and how it effects their motivation. Chamberlin & Chambers (1991) demonstrate that the cerebrum, which is the part of the brain that controls the decision-making process and language and mathematical abilities, is the last part of the brain to develop. This area of the brain doesn't reach full maturation until well into the 20s (Giedd, 2012). With this development pattern in mind, educators have the potential to create homework assignments that align with teens' development and are more motivating.

Preview Methodology

Using a mixed methodology, this study examined two different teachers/classes with similar student demographics but with different methods of assigning homework and providing feedback on the homework. In order to see how these methods of assigning homework affected inclusiveness of an assignment and student motivation, homework participation rates were measured through teachers' recorded homework grades and the average overall grades were compared to the average homework grades to deem which social groups aligned the homework assignments with the learning goals of the class.

The study began with each teacher being interviewed with open-ended questions regarding their philosophies and practices on homework. These teachers were selected based on teaching similar content and grade, and having differing homework practices from one another. Then 14 students (7 from each class) out of the 40 student participants were selected to be

interviewed to discuss what they found to be meaningful assignments and helpful feedback across their schedules. This became insightful when comparing student responses to actual practices and completion rates. Data were then gathered to analyze homework participation rates and effective and inclusive practices using grades in each teacher's grading system.

Significance of Study

When it comes to equitable homework practices, there is much research on where the problem lies, but not enough conclusive research on potential solutions and effective strategies (Sallee & Rigler, 2008; Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, & Ludtke, 2009; Wallace, 2015; Haas, 2008; Eren & Henderson, 2011). The intention behind most classroom practices is to improve every student's learning and academic success; and while educators may lose sight of this end goal due to lack of time, inflexible policies, or antiquated traditions, the intention is still there waiting for a solution. Bringing insight to homework practices that have a positive impact on students' grades and attitudes toward learning may lead to more equitable, student-centered homework practices that engage our students and encourage them to be lifelong learners. Furthermore, allowing a student to be successful in one area of a classroom only motivates them to try harder in other areas. There tends to be a discrepancy in academic performance among students depending on ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. While there is not one definitive contributor to this inequity, homework has the potential to be a piece of the problem and, therefore, needs to be deeply explored.

Summary

Many educators struggle with the idea that homework, a timeless tradition, needs to evolve into a practice that fits a more diverse population with a myriad of needs. These needs intensify as students become adolescents and there is a heavier workload in education, more

distractions, and cognitive hindrances. As Daniels (2011) posits, the workload multiplies as a student enters middle school at the same time as they become more distracted by family and social commitments (Balfanz et al., 2007). When prioritizing all their homework with outside commitments it may be difficult for an adolescent to grasp the weight of the consequences that result in neglecting their academics as they lack consequential thinking (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991).

Current research shows that when a homework assignment is meaningful and well-thought out by the instructor, the student will be motivated to complete the assignment as they see the relevance and purpose of the assignment as discussed by Csikszentmihalyi (1991) in his Flow Theory. This motivation plays a key role in any student's academic success and future. The question of what an effective and inclusive assignment that motivates a student academically remains to be answered. The existing literature and research on homework are further explored in chapter two.

Definition of Terms

504. Section 504 requires recipients to provide to students with disabilities appropriate educational services designed to meet the individual needs of such students to the same extent as the needs of students without disabilities are met. An appropriate education for a student with a disability under the Section 504 regulations could consist of education in regular classrooms, education in regular classes with supplementary services, and/or special education and related services (Department of Education, 2015).

Cerebrum. The largest division of the brain and is the seat of decision making, language, and mathematical abilities in most humans (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991).

Common core state standards. A set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017).

English learner. Students who do not speak, read, write or understand English well as a result of English not being their home language (Department of Education,).

Individualized education plan. A document that creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities (Department of Education, 2007).

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature on homework practices is vast and explores both the inequities and the opportunities that homework can provide. Due to the diversity of students and the variety in homework practices, the effects of homework on students fluctuates. With such varying results on the effects of homework, it is difficult to identify effective homework practices. Through an examination of the existing research on homework, several themes arose that will be discussed in this chapter.

The first theme of this literature review will examine underserved populations when it comes to equity and access in education by examining the disparities in education and who is mainly affected. The next theme investigated will be the potential contributions to student academic success and engagement that homework might produce, which allows readers to understand the underlying purposes behind various homework practices. The third theme becomes crucial to understanding the diverse student population in our schools today in order to maximize the learning potential homework can have on all students. This diverse population requires a deep understanding of what students' needs might be. Finally, it becomes necessary to understand adolescent brain development. Given that their brain development affects so many aspects of their lives (i.e. motivation, interactions, and behaviors), understanding adolescents' cognitive needs allows educators to create optimal results in student learning. Through the exploration of these themes, the foundation of effective and inclusive homework practices becomes clearer and an understanding of adolescent motivation is gained.

Inequality in Education

The dissimilarities in opportunities among marginalized groups in education must first be examined to understand what to avoid when creating assignments. There is a profound discrepancy in opportunities that leave Blacks, Latinos, lower socioeconomic populations, and English Learners at a disadvantage in the educational system (Milner, 2013). In the diverse population that educators serve, minorities are the underserved. Valenzuela (1999) asserted that curricula demands students of color to place value on the content educators create and deliver, with minimal regard to the students' culture, interests, or backgrounds. This lack of attention to student predisposition can be observed in gifted education programs, as Ford (2014) pointed out, that claim to be colorblind which makes culture and ethnicity seem inconsequential when, in reality, ignoring culture and race in education has a negative effect on a student's academic performance. This covert practice prevents diverse students from accessing the material and, therefore, limits their learning potential in comparison to their White, upper class peers.

Another inequity that can be examined in education is within the assessments and standardized testing that education mandates upon all students. Research shows that these tests advocate English as the preeminent language (Hernandez & Daoud, 2014), which overtly devalues non-native English speakers and the resources with which they come to school. Furthermore, Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005, p. 168) asserted that education has been built upon the notion that creating uniformity is the only way to educate, which creates a "deficit model" wherein low income and minority students are perceived as less capable than their White peers. Rather than seeing what students are capable of with the resources they have, non-native English speakers are conversely viewed as coming to school with limitations and hindrances when given certain labels such as "English Learner".

Harris, Brown, Ford, and Richardson (2004) further explored the concept of the deficit model when researching unrepresented races in high performing classes and the negative effects of tracking students based on their academic performance. Their research found that since inequitable practices still exist in education, minority students, particularly Black students, are placed in low performing groups. Moreover, once students were placed, most of the White students were placed in high-achieving groups and most of the ethnically and racially diverse students were placed in the low-achieving groups. While Harris et al. (2004) contended that the issue lies in marginalized groups being placed in low-achieving classes, a larger part of the problem may lie within the way society and education define achievement in academics.

The way achievement in education is defined varies, Milner (2012) pointed out, as it is unclear to what extent achievement is related to learning. The definition of achievement varies from school to school and culture to culture; therefore, it is unclear as to who decides what achievement is in education. Without a unified, consistent, and inclusive notion of what achievement in education is, it decreases the challenge of implementing high expectations and effective assignments for all students, regardless of race, native language, or socioeconomic status. In examining a few of the larger practices that create inequalities in education, it becomes evident what to avoid in smaller practices such as homework practices in order to ensure they are inclusive and effective for all students.

Homework's Contributions

Whether homework assignments should be included in curricula is controversial and the research is inconclusive. Some educators and researchers argue that homework has the potential to be meaningful. Haas (2008) developed questions that educators should ask themselves as they plan their lessons and align assignments. Haas argued that educators should assign homework in

a calculated way with the learning objectives in the forefront of the mind; this also means keeping students' goals, abilities, and lives outside of the classroom in mind. The author provides a list of questions educators should ask themselves in order to create assignments in a fair and equitable way. When this is done, students are able to gain a better learning of the material, which allows classroom instruction to move forward more efficiently. The concept of assigning homework strategically is also examined by Sallee and Rigler (2008) when they revamped their own homework practices in the classroom. They found that when they assigned meaningful assignments rather than creating mass quantities of homework, they were able to know their students had the opportunity to complete their reading and assignments. This allowed them, as educators, to avoid wasting instructional time backtracking on the material some students were not able to successfully complete (Sallee & Rigler, 2008). When homework was designed with the students and learning goals in mind, homework has the capacity to efficiently use instruction time and teach students outside of the classroom. Furthermore, Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) pointed out, a student learns best not by reading about something, but by reading about *and* experiencing that something. With this said, it is possible to assign homework that allows students to tap into their prior knowledge through reflection, prediction, etc.

On the other hand, Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, and Ludtke (2009) discussed a student's success or failures in completing assignments transfers in their self-perception regarding academic capabilities and strengths. This study explored one of the underlying problems with homework and how it has the potential to affect a student's overall academic performance.

However, there is also research that suggests homework becomes frivolous in certain core subjects since homework completion does not show any correlation to test scores (Eren & Henderson, 2011). Their research found that homework in math had a positive effect on test scores, but homework had little to no impact in science, English and history. Additionally, they found that math homework had a smaller effect on Black students as compared to White students. However, within this same study, it was discovered that science homework has positive effects on Hispanic students and that additional homework in math is beneficial for students whose parents have a high school diploma or some college. Furthermore, research conducted by Ariës and Cabus (2015) found that test scores can improve with completion of homework. Cooper, Lindsay, Greathouse, and Nye (1998) built on this research when they discovered that when students in secondary education are assigned a reasonable amount of homework, their academic performance improves along with their study habits.

Beyond test scores and academic achievement, the research frequently shows the dilemma of just how much pressure homework puts on a student. Demands for students to participate in extra-curricular activities and non-academic commitments presents a crucial issue as students grapple with the issue of prioritizing and balancing their various commitments with school obligations (Sallee & Rigler, 2008). These pressures especially become problematic as students enter middle and high school and have multiple teachers that assign homework making participation in family events/responsibilities and after-school activities difficult for students to prioritize (Daniels, 2011).

With the research on whether homework should be a part of curricula being inconclusive, the final decision falls on the teacher themselves. It does become clear, however, that should a teacher choose to assign homework there is a plethora of goals behind different homework

practices (i.e. test scores, study habits, teaching responsibility, student learning, etc.). Having this goal in the forefront of the planning process enables the assignment to be more effective for student learning.

Student Needs with Homework

As Haas (2008, p.14) found, "one size doesn't fit all" when it comes to assigning homework. When examining native English speakers that perform at grade level, there is still variance in how much time an assignment might take one student compared to another. One homework assignment can take a wide range of time for students to complete as different students have different factors to contend with (i.e. prior knowledge and learning capabilities) (Sallee & Rigler, 2008). These variances exist even without looking at the needs of students who receive special education services or are labeled as English Learners.

There has been more of a push in legislation to integrate students with Individualized Education Plans in the general education classroom. Feldman, Carter, Asmus, and Brock (2016, p. 192) reported that "58% of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 44% of students with intellectual disability (ID), and 29% of students with multiple disabilities were enrolled in regular classes 40% or more of their school day." Feldman, et al. further argued that the purpose of this integration is to allow students with disabilities the opportunity to enhance their learning and socially interact with their peers without disabilities.

If this is the case, it becomes paramount that educators understand the challenges that a student with learning disabilities faces in order to maximize every student's learning potential. Research has found that students with learning disabilities are more likely to experience anxiety, exhibit disruptive behaviors, and experience diminished social, academic, and family lives; all of this potentially leading to internalized negative feelings towards academics and school (Mayes &

Moore, 2016). Feldman, et al. (2016) found that students with severe disabilities had such negative experiences in school, that they would avoid school, missing an average of just under one fifth of instructional time.

Furthermore, Mason and Hedin (2011) contended that one of the main challenges that many students with learning disabilities face is the lack of basic reading comprehension skills. McCulley, Katz, and Vaughn (2013) further asserted that a majority of students with learning disabilities demonstrate learning problems in the area of reading due to: the cognitive processes reading requires, appropriate differentiation that is not always delivered within instruction, inadequate instructional time allotted for growth in reading, and a learning environment that does not encourage growth.

The challenges that students with learning disabilities face are similar to those challenges faced by English Learners. As a matter of fact, Artiles (2003) pointed out that there is a large overrepresentation of English Learners in special education programs. The researcher found that not only do English Learners in special education experience the challenges that other students face, they also face a level of cultural insensitivity in the special education classroom. Artiles posits that this cultural insensitivity comes from special educators' lack of understanding culture and cultural differences. This lack of understanding and sensitivity eventually turns the learner off to the teacher and the learning in the classroom.

Just like a student with learning disabilities or any other student, English Learners internalize negative feelings of frustration as they struggle through their academic difficulties (Sechrest, 2013). Olson and Land (2007) reported that English Learners in high school are more overlooked than younger English Learners and, therefore, are not as linguistically prepared to complete independent assignments as their peers. Moreover, Rhodes (2015) found that student

self-esteem is directly linked to their academic achievement. In other words, if students feel inadequately prepared to perform academically, their chances of academic success will diminish.

When assigning English Learners students daily homework, teachers should recognize that many of them become discouraged. These feelings of defeat directly affect students' performance and motivation in subsequent academic years making it clear that the varying needs of the students must always be in the forefront of one's mind as homework assignments are developed.

Adolescents' Development and Motivation

While it is easy for educators to blame fail rates on external causes (i.e. home life, poverty, etc.), much research attributes academic success to student motivation; an element that a teacher can directly generate with the right curriculum and attitude. Jackson (2003) maintained that in order for students to have high academic achievement, they must put forth a substantial amount of time and mental energy into such activities as homework. This time and energy comes from the motivation a student feels towards a task and, according to Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory, it can only be achieved if a student feels there is a reasonable balance between the challenge and their individual skill level (Beard, 2015). The notion of a "reasonable balance" is worth consideration when examining the various complications (i.e. language barriers, extra-curricular activities, family obligations, learning disabilities, etc.) with which different students contend.

Moreover, Wallace (2015) reported that assigning too much homework at the high school level can cause higher stress levels and physical health problems. Daniels (2011) also illustrated this by pointing out that many students have not been taught how to manage or prioritize a workload containing five to seven classes worth of homework. Daniels further asserted that by

demonstrating different ways of organizing teachers can generate motivating learning environments. Teaching students how to time manage becomes crucial to their motivation and academic success since this is not yet a skill that is embedded in the human brain. Scarborough, Lewis, and Kulkarni (2010) further maintained that teaching the goal setting process can enhance cognitive and social development. In educating students on the various ways to organize and set goals not only motivates them, it helps them develop cognitively.

In reality, the adolescent brain is ill-equipped for time management and many of the tasks students must complete in education. The prefrontal lobes of the human brain, which are responsible for "more intricate and longer-term plans," do not fully develop until the late teen years (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991, p. 229). They further described the "new brain system," or the cerebrum, as the part of the brain that allows for a "rational mind" and "is the seat of decision making;" the cerebrum only reaches full maturation in a person's mid-twenties (p. 229). This means that along with any external struggles an adolescent in high school may have (i.e. socially, academically, etc.), they also must grapple with an internal struggle of which they have little control. So, if the ability to prioritize and make conducive decisions does not fully develop until after high school, then the question remains, what amount of homework fosters motivation and academic progression in the classroom?

Summary

There is a discrepancy in equity in education and while homework cannot be the sole contributor, it can be a crucial factor depending on its role in the classroom. However, homework is assigned or used in a content's curriculum, the first step to achieving equity in education is by ceasing "identity-blind" practices and becoming more culturally sensitive and mindful of our practices (Jackson, 2013, p. 585). Moreover, if educators are to create

assignments that are effective and inclusive, they first must understand the challenges with which their underserved students struggle. English Learners and students with learning disabilities are more likely to contend with difficulties socially and within the home environment, behavioral issues, and anxiety. These adversities make them more likely to resent education and to drop out of high school (Balfanz, Herzog & Mac Iver, 2007).

None of this is to say that homework does not have a place in education. There is research that shows that when homework is well thought-out and purposeful, it can be beneficial to students (Sallee & Rigler, 2008). The other component to effective homework practices is providing immediate and specific feedback to maintain a level of motivation among students (Beard, 2015).

Preserving motivation among students becomes essential since many practices, including homework, at the middle and high school level counter an adolescent's brain development and their level of maturity. Many adolescents do not innately possess the capacity to prioritize tasks, such as academics, over other obligations or desires. As Daniels (2011) pointed out, this time management is a learned skill and will encourage students to be more academically successful.

So, while there is a plethora of research on areas surrounding homework, there is a need to explore specific homework practices and their benefits and limitations. Chapter 3 outlines the methods in which different homework approaches will be examined and analyzed with the goal to answer the following questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?

Chapter 3

Methodology

There is varying research regarding homework practices and the effects these practices can have on different groups of students. As Haas (2008) argues, homework has the potential to be meaningful as long as the homework assignment and practice is thoughtful and purposeful. While there is much research on whether to assign homework as well as how to do it most effectively (Hernández & Daoud, 2014; Jackson, 2003; Mason & Hedin, 2011; McCulley, Katz, & Vaughn, 2013; Milner, 2013; Olson & Land, 2007; Sechrest, 2013; Valenzuela, 1999), there is room for evaluation on existing practices and how students' attitudes towards homework influence motivation and student learning. After reviewing the literature, two question regarding homework evolved to drive this study: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?

This study will explore homework practices and policies among two different educators and their students' perspectives regarding homework at a high school in North County San Diego. In order to evaluate whether these policies and practices effective and inclusive, homework participation rates were examined and average homework grades were compared to average students' overall grades in each class. Additionally, students were interviewed to find what they considered to be motivating factors and effective feedback in homework practices. This chapter provides a detailed account of the research design, the participants and setting, what measures were used to conduct this study, what procedures were in place, and how the data were processed and analyzed.

Design

To explore the research questions, a mixed methods approach was used to provide a "multifaceted picture" of the benefits and hindrances of different homework practices (Mertler & Charles, 2011, p. 322) . Quantitative data were collected in the form of the students' class grades while qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews elicited information about the students' attitudes toward school and homework. Each class was chosen based on student demographic to ensure similar dynamics (i.e. English Learners, students with Individualized Education Plans, etc.) between both classes. Furthermore, pre-existing documentation on each student of each class found in the school's database was examined to ensure a stratified sampling of students was interviewed. This pre-existing documentation contained academic transcripts and forms identifying students' native language, ethnicity, gender and whether they were English Learners or had a 504 (a 504 is a document that requires accommodations for students with learning disabilities) or Individualized Education Plan.

The classes that were observed, College Preparatory History 10, were of the same content and at the same grade level in order to explicitly study the impact of two different homework policies in classes that are representative of the larger student body of the high school. First, each teacher was interviewed regarding his/her beliefs and policies on homework to give insight into the practices they executed and gain understanding of what expectations were held of students. Then students were interviewed to find what attitudes and expectations they had of homework. This allowed insight on what types of homework policies and feedback students found to be most effective and motivating. Once interviews were completed, students' homework participation rates, average homework grades, and average overall grades in the class

were examined to determine which homework policies and practices fostered student academic success in the class and whether they were inclusive of all groups of students in the class.

Participants

Two different teachers/classes with different methods of assigning homework were studied for a total of 40 tenth grade students who participated in this study. These two teachers were invited based on their differing practices and both agreed to participate. In order to assess different homework practices, two teachers with moderate variations in homework practices were observed. One teacher had been teaching at the same high school for four years and received her Bachelor's and credential in History from the state of California. The second teacher held a Bachelor's and credential in History and has been teaching History at varying levels in secondary education for 15 years at different schools in Southern California with the last two years being at the high school where this study was conducted.

All students were required to take History in the 10th grade with the option to enter at the College Preparatory, Honors, or Advanced Placement level. Students could be recommended for any of the levels, but ultimately it was the student's choice at which level they participate. Each class received 285 instructional minutes a week with a modified block schedule and both History classes taught the same curriculum but used different approaches to teach the material (i.e. the teachers could use their own assignments, instruction, and grading policies to assess students' learning). The number of students in each History 10 CP class varied.

The first History class selected, Class A, had 24 student participants total with 12 of the students being female and 12 were males. According to school records, the class consisted of 10 Latino, 1 Black, and 13 White students. There were eight English Learners in Class A whereas in Class B there were five English Learners and both classes had two students with

Individualized Education Plans. In Class B there were 16 student participants with 12 female students and 4 male students. Student documentation showed that there were 4 Latino, 1 Black, 1 Asian, and 10 White students.

Setting

Each college preparatory History class was at the 10th grade level and was required to teach the same overall curriculum, but each teacher employed differing homework policies and practices. The classes were purposefully selected at the College Preparatory level as the demographic (ethnicity, gender, and learner types) of students represented the larger student population of the high school where the research was conducted. The research site's School Accountability Report Card reported the high school's demographic consisting of 3% Black, 6%Asian, 3% Filipino, 41% Latino, 45% White, and 2% other for the 2015-16 school year. Using the school's database, Synergy, each classes' demographic was assessed and the class population was duplicated in the pool of students selected to be interviewed. The ratio of students in each category: ethnicity, gender, and learner type, was reproduced as closely as possible in the selection of the seven students interviewed to gain understanding of their attitudes towards homework. Students were invited to participate in interviews by looking at their gender, ethnicity, and other documents in Synergy to ensure that a diverse pool of students were selected to reflect the diversity of the larger student body at the high school.

Instruments / Measures

Open ended questions were used throughout both student and teacher interviews in order to encourage participants to express and expand upon their beliefs and opinions using their own terminology and to prevent restricted or predetermined participants' responses. Furthermore, since the district allowed teachers to come up with their own homework practices and policies,

open ended questions were needed to provide teachers the freedom to elaborate on the homework they assigned, their policies, and the feedback that was provided

Teachers were first interviewed with the following questions to identify their beliefs and philosophies behind homework:

1. Do you assign homework in your class?
2. Why or why not (i.e. what is your overall purpose behind homework)?
3. Please state your homework policy as written in your syllabus.
4. How long does an average assignment take?
5. What does an average homework assignment entail?
6. How do you grade the homework or provide feedback?
7. What types of resources does a student have access to if they are struggling?
8. What does the grading system look like for the average homework assignment?
9. How are your grades weighted?
10. What is the policy for homework turned in late?

For the teachers, the researcher defined homework as any independent practice that a student was asked to work on outside of class time. Teachers were asked ten questions total to provide insight on what the assignments generally involved and how students received feedback and grades for the homework. The answers to these questions also provided more depth to the teacher's philosophies on homework. While the teacher's personal beliefs and attitudes about homework were gathered in the first few questions, the second portion of questions gave insights regarding the teacher's policies, or their guidelines for the students.

Interviews were also conducted among seven students from each class to assess their perspective on homework. This was deemed the best format to collect data from students since it

allowed in-depth answers with elaboration. Additionally, some of the students interviewed required accommodations such as reading instructions or questions aloud in their learning and assessment, so it was decided that all students should be interviewed face-to-face in a quiet, private place removed from the classroom and peers.

Students were interviewed with the following questions:

1. Think of the homework practice that worked best for you throughout your years of education.
    a. How long did an average assignment take?
    b. What did it require you to do?
    c. What motivates you to complete an assignment?
    d. How did you receive a grade from your teacher?
    e. Did your teacher provide feedback for the work you completed? Explain.
    f. What types of resources did you have access to if you were struggling?
2. When assigned homework, what do you ideally expect to a get out of the assignment?
3. What is one disadvantage you see in having homework in any class? Explain.
4. What is one advantage you see in having homework in any class? Explain.

Before each interview, the researcher defined homework as any work that a student is asked to work on independently outside of class time. The first question along with a subset of questions encouraged students to explain and elaborate on homework practices that worked for them. Listening to student voice is vital in education because it introduces "the missing perspectives of those who experience daily the effects of existing educational policies-in-practice" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p.3). Since the purpose of this study was to discover effective

homework practices, it was critical to elicit the students' perspective about homework practices that nurtured or hindered their attitudes toward school or their academic performance.

Furthermore, the last three questions of the interview allowed students to voice their thoughts on existing homework practices. This gave insight into what students' presumptions and expectations were regarding homework. Not only did these questions give general understanding of students' expectations of homework, they also allowed understanding of what the students wanted in an assignment so that educators could allow student autonomy in their homework practices. Giving students a voice and autonomy in their learning has been found to increase motivation in learning as well (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). These responses enabled a gain in understanding of effective homework assignments and how homework policies affect motivation.

Once interviews were conducted, the data were collected in the form of students' progress report grades from the end of the grading period were collected to measure the student's success in the class. Student's homework grades were also collected to compare with their overall grades in the class. This comparison shed light on what effective and inclusive homework practices looked like in each classroom and how each practice or policy motivated student's academic achievement in their respective classes.

Procedures

Once approval for research was received from the Institutional Review Board, teachers were approached via email explaining the study, the purpose behind it, and the methodology (see Appendix A). They were also informed that their participation was not mandatory and completely optional. Once it was determined that each teacher had similar classes, differing homework practices, and willingness to participate, they were provided with written consent

forms that were returned within the week (see Appendix B). After they consented to take part in the study, a time for a formal interview was set up via email. The formal interview was conducted between 7 to 17 minutes in a face-to-face meeting in the privacy of their offices where their responses were audio recorded and later transcribed.

The teacher of Class A, for confidentiality purposes will be called Teacher A, took 7 minutes for the interviewing process. The teacher of Class B, for confidentiality purposes will be called Teacher B, took 17 minutes. Teacher B was trying a modified approach to standards-based grading and needed to elaborate and describe his/her policies in more depth. This elaboration and explanation not only helped the researcher gain an understanding of what the homework policies and practices were, but it also shed light on what the students' overall grades in the class involved.

Immediately after each interview was conducted, times were set up to visit each class and explain the study and its purpose to the students. It was emphasized to students that participating in the study was a choice and if they chose not to participate there would be no negative repercussions to their grades or their treatment in the classroom. After they were briefed on the study, students were provided with Child Assent Forms and Parent Consent Forms (see Appendices C and D). Because a large population of the students at the research site were Latino, the Parent Consent Forms were provided in English and Spanish. Additionally, at the high school site, students at the college preparatory level were required to be fluent English speakers so the Child Assent Form was only presented in English. Students were asked to bring back both completed forms in five school days when their respective teachers would collect them.

After consent forms were collected and selected students were invited to participate, student interviews were conducted across the hall in an unoccupied room. Teachers chose times during class when students did not miss instruction that was detrimental to their academic performance or understanding of the material. While being interviewed, students' responses were recorded and later transcribed. Student interviews took from six to ten minutes.
Once all interviews were conducted, each teacher's grades were reviewed from the latest progress report. The progress report grades were collected, averaged, and compared to students' average homework grades to determine if the homework assignments aligned with the learning goals of the class. If the averages were aligned with a marginal difference of 5% or less, the homework practices and policies were determined to be effective. Both the grades and homework grades were also broken down and compared using the following identifiers: ethnicity, gender, and special learning needs to examine the inclusiveness of different homework practices. These identifiers were found using the school's documentation in their database, Synergy; this database and documentation was accessible to each teacher. By comparing grades and homework grades within different groups of students, the benefits and limitations of the different independent practice routines became more apparent and were analyzed under different lenses.

Additionally, homework participation rates in each class were analyzed to find which homework policy and practice elicited a higher participation rate. This would indicate which practice was more motivating to students. Motivation in completing homework was also determined through student responses from their interviews. After student interviews were conducted, the in vivo coding process was used to analyze students' preferences regarding homework practices and policies.

Analysis

Inductive analysis was used to code and categorize data, dissect various responses and findings, and to synthesize all the findings. Teacher interviews were read multiple times with the intent to understand each teacher's homework policy and to categorize the homework practices into different distinguishable categories. This allowed comparisons to be made with the grades and participation rates between the two classes.

Before grades or homework participation rates could be analyzed, student labels found in the school site's database were recorded to identify which students were considered English Learners (E.L.s), or had Individualized Education Plans (I.E.P.s) or 504s, or which gender or ethnicity they identified as. Using pseudonyms, grades and completion rates were compared in each of these labels in each class. This was important as it permitted analysis of homework completion and grade achievement among the different groups. Through this analysis, the different homework practices could be deemed as more effective among groups with higher overall grade averages and homework grade averages. This analysis addressed the research question: What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom?

In student interviews, the student responses to ideal homework practices were transcribed, coded, and charted to discuss student preference. Through open-ended questions, descriptions of various homework practices that they found to be ideal from past experiences were elaborated on by students to help identify how the assignment was disseminated, what the motivating factors were in the assignments, and how feedback was provided. For example, many students stated that a motivating factor for completing their homework was that homework helped them receive a higher grade. So, the term "grades" was used in the data to define one of the major motivators as identified by the students interviewed. Through the answers to these

questions, students' attitudes and opinions about ideal homework practices can be used to examine what components of a homework policy and practice creates motivation in learning. Moreover, by analyzing these charts of interview responses, students' perspectives regarding effective feedback will be examined which directly responds to the research question: How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?

Summary

This study conducted open-ended interviews to gain understanding of two different teachers' homework practices and students' perspectives of what homework should entail. The interviews were distributed face-to-face in a private room to protect participant confidentiality. All participants were also given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study to protect students' grades, learning, perspectives and teachers' philosophies and practices. Progress report grades were averaged and compared to average homework grades to find benefits and limitations that various homework practices offer in student learning. Additionally, student interviews allowed students to share their beliefs and expectations of homework. These findings were used to evaluate effective homework practices in education and examine ways of creating inclusive homework assignments that allow all students to be successful in their learning environment.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to learn more about homework practices and policies and how these practices can impact student motivation. This mixed methods study used teacher and student interviews along with students' grades to gather data and to answer the research questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments? The in vivo coding method was used to categorize and analyze interview responses. Coding the responses was an appropriate process because the research questions guiding this study focused on the perspectives of the students' themselves. Through this analysis, the research gives a better understanding of what students find to be effective homework practices and policies. Furthermore, it unveils homework policies and feedback that students find to be most motivating. Motivation was also examined through homework participation rates.

Students' average overall grades and average homework grades were also compared and used to find effective homework policies and practices in two specific classes with differing homework methods. With these data, effective and inclusive homework policies and practices were analyzed by comparing students' grades between the two classes observed and by looking at performance between ethnicities, genders, and learner types (i.e. students with an I.E.P., 504, and English Learners). The homework methods in the two classes were discovered through teacher interviews allowing a better understanding of the results and findings from the grade analysis and student interviews.

Chapter four first discusses the homework practices that were observed in the two classes as discovered through teacher interviews. Homework participation and grades along with overall class grades in each class were then reviewed to examine homework's potential contribution to learning. The students' grades and homework grades are then presented by ethnicity, gender, and learner type to review inclusive homework practices and policies. Finally, students' interview responses and homework participation rates are explored to find what motivations, expectations, and ideals they have when receiving and completing homework.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Differing Homework Practices

There were two teacher participants, Teacher A and Teacher B, who each had one class period participate in the study. Both classes (for confidentiality will be called Class A and Class B in respect to their teachers' pseudonyms) were 10th grade History classes at the College Preparatory level. The teachers in the History department collaborated weekly and concurred that teaching History is shifting to more of a writing-based curriculum rather than historical content curriculum since the adoption of Common Core State Standards. With this in mind, the department agreed to teach the same curriculum, but the techniques or assignments that teachers employed to teach the curriculum was at their discretion. This meant that homework practices and policies were also at the discretion of each teacher.

Some of the schools within the district had adopted a "No Homework" policy as the community has expressed their displeasure with the amount of time homework takes away from the students and how much stress it may induce. While the high school site where this study was conducted had not adopted this policy, many teachers had started to modify their homework policies and practices. Furthermore, many teachers recently instated standards-based grading

practices in their classrooms which allowed the teacher to evaluate a student's academic mastery of standards or learning goals.

Teacher A received her Bachelor's and credential in History. She had four years teaching experience with all four of these years taking place at the high school research site. With 33 students in her class, Teacher A employed a more traditional homework policy wherein students are assigned homework weekly. It was stated in her interview that her purpose behind assigning homework was to "maximize instructional time" with each assignment taking, on average, 30 minutes. Homework generally consisted of students taking chapter notes from the textbook or finishing an assignment that wasn't completed in class. The homework was graded differently depending on the type of homework. Chapter notes received a "credit" or "no credit" grade, but other assignments wherein Teacher A was looking for "quality" was graded with a rubric, could be returned with written feedback, or the correct response was modeled in front of the class depending on the assignment. Homework, which was labeled as "Formative Assessments" in Teacher A's syllabus and gradebook, counted as 35% of a student's overall grade in the class. Students could makeup or revise any Formative Assessments throughout the semester until they received the grade they desire.

Teacher B held a Bachelor's and credential in History and has been teaching History at various middle and high schools in Southern California for 15 years. Teacher B had taught History 10 for the last two years at the high school where this study was conducted. During her interview, Teacher B explained that she does not assign homework due to the belief that if her instruction during class is "strong enough" and the lesson plan is "well thought out," then homework was not necessary because students would obtain the learning that they need during class. Teacher B did express that some students took classwork or independent practice home

because they needed more time to complete or refine an assignment. Classwork or independent practice done during class was, on average, given 15-20 minutes in an hour-long class period to complete. If a student took work home, Teacher B stated that they might spend on average five to ten more minutes on the assignment. Much of the work that students took home involved writing where the students would receive guidance and feedback as the assignment was completed in class. The class gained an understanding of what was expected of them before they began the assignment by seeing a teacher example and then creating a rubric for the assignment as a class. Since Teacher B did not have a homework policy and late work was accepted throughout the semester, students were free to turn in or revise work for the desired grade at any point in the semester. Students received a 1, 2, or 3 as a grade depending on how well they completed an assignment; a 1 was given to incomplete assignments, a 2 meant that the assignment was proficient, and a 3 equated to mastery. Independent practice was entered as "Assignments and Participation" and was worth 25% of each student's grade.

Homework as it Relates to Learning

Class A had 24 student participants, and Class B had 16 student participants. Progress report grades were examined in each class. This was the first progress report that transpired over a seven-week time period. The average overall grade in the class was calculated and compared to the average homework grade. Since it was argued that homework should be well thought out by the teacher and purposeful in relation to the class curriculum, homework grades and overall class grades should be reflective of one another. If the homework grades and overall grades were not reflective of one another, homework practices were considered less effective. Due to the literature being inconclusive regarding homework's contribution to learning, it was

appropriate to use the data to find whether homework grades reflected overall class grades to respond to the research question: 1) What does effective homework look like in the classroom?

Since Teacher A defined his/her homework assignments as "Formative Assessments," all grades in this category were averaged out showing that students averaged at 81% in this portion of their grades. In comparison, students in Class A received an average overall grade of 74% showing a difference in percentage compared to the average homework grade. Since the difference is significant enough to change a student's letter grade on a traditional grading scale, this difference demonstrated that there was a discrepancy between Teacher A's learning goals and his/her homework practice.

With Teacher B not assigning homework, "Assignments and Participation" grades were used to find that students averaged 75% in the homework category of their grades. The overall grades for Class B averaged at 78% showing similar percentages between the homework and overall grades without outstanding differences. With these percentages being so aligned, it is deemed that the homework practices and policies reflected the learning goals in the class and, therefore demonstrate effective homework practices and policies.

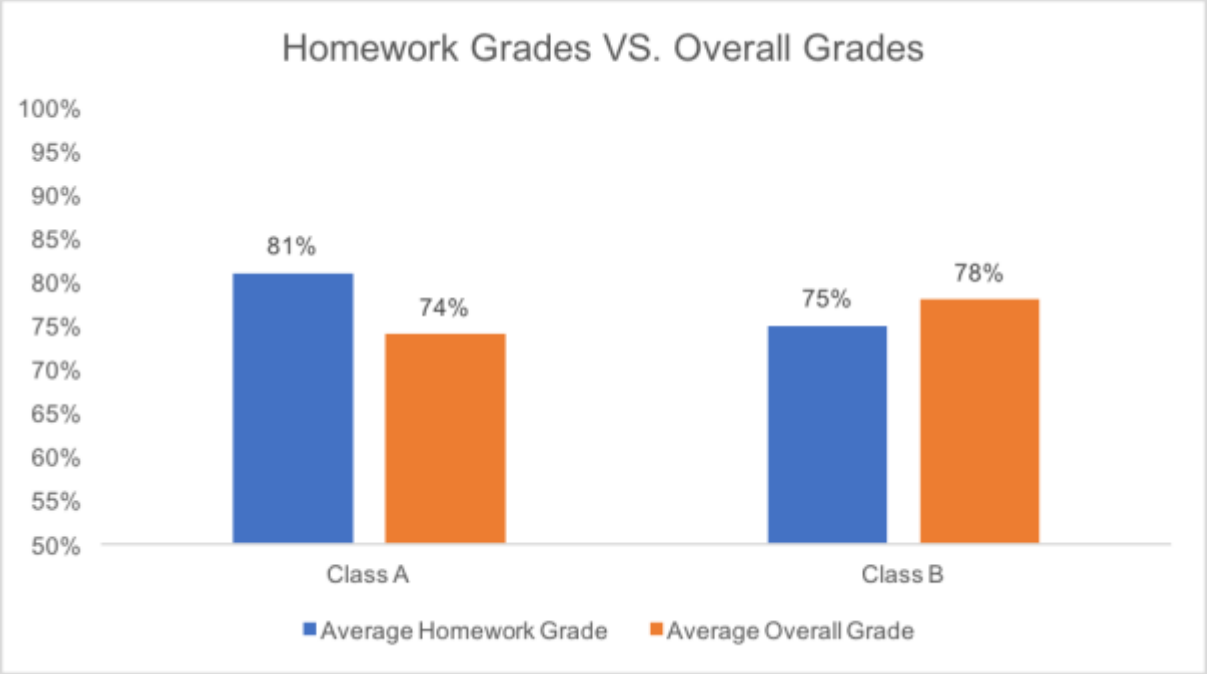

Figure 1. Homework Grades VS. Overall Grades

In answering the first research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom?, the data suggested that Class B's no homework practice was more effective since the homework grades and overall grades were more closely aligned. However, Class A did have similar averages in overall grades to Class B demonstrating that students were just as capable of being successful in Class A as Class B regardless of the homework policy. It was also notable that Class A averaged higher percentages in homework than Class B suggesting that when either class did receive homework or assignments, they generally received higher marks and were more successful in Class A. Since these were averages, the next section dissects which groups truly benefitted from each classes' homework policies and practices to determine if they were inclusive.

Inclusivity in Homework

The comparison between the average overall grade and the average homework grade in each class is first charted by ethnicity. In Class A, White students averaged at 82% for their overall grade and 81% for their homework grades. Latino students' average homework score was 63% and their overall grade averaged at 67%. However, it is notable that the average homework grade between the different social groups showed such discrepancy as it ranged from 81% to 63%, that it becomes clear that the homework policies and practices in Class A were not effective for all ethnic groups and, therefore are not inclusive.

Furthermore, it is notable that the averages show a decline for ethnically diverse students. Where White students are receiving averages of 82% in overall grades, Latino students are receiving 67%. While this is not the direct focus of the research questions, these differences in grade averages do exhibit discrepancies between the class policies and practices and the motivating factors among different ethnicities in Class A.

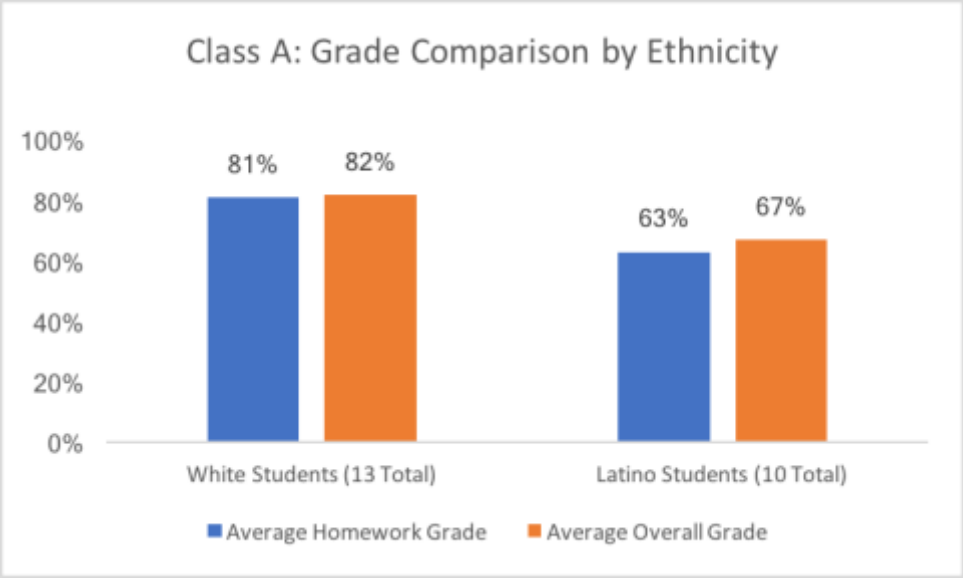

Figure 2. Class A: Grade Comparison by Ethnicity

There were also differences between the homework and overall grade averages among White and Latino students in Class B. White students averaged at 72% in homework and 78% overall in the class and Latino students earned an average of 83% in homework and 76% overall. Since these averages show differences to one another within ethnic groupings, the averages suggest that the homework (or independent work in Class B) does not reflect the learning goals in the class for either ethnicity.

In Class B, the discrepancy in averages between ethnicities is noteworthy as well. White students' average homework grade was 72% and Latino students averaged at 83% for homework. The average homework grade among both ethnicities shows a remarkable gap between the groups showing that the homework practice and policies in Class B are not as inclusive for White students as they are for Latino students.

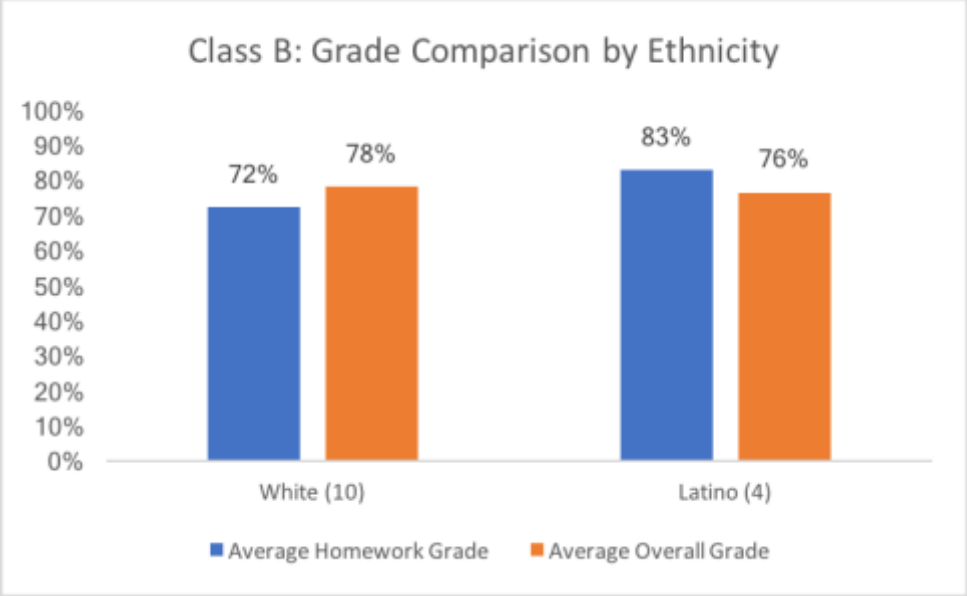

Figure 3. Class B: Grade Comparison by Ethnicity

Grade comparisons were also examined between females and males. In Class A it was found that there was not a difference between grade averages at all for females, but there was a notable difference (a difference of 13%) for males between their average overall grades and

homework grades. Similar results were found for Class B with females only showing a one percent difference between their grade averages, but males had a ten percent difference between their average overall grades and average homework grades.

Even though there was a deviation in higher average overall grades and lower average homework grades among males in Class B, their average homework grade was similar to females and yet they averaged remarkably higher than females for an overall grade in Class B. This suggested that while the homework practices or policies were less effective for them, males still performed better than the females in Class B. Class A was inversely effected with males receiving a lower average overall grade and a higher average homework grade suggesting that males did not find the homework practices to align with the learning goals in Class A. These results may have been due to several reasons (i.e. different motivations, differences in learning, etc.), but it did become clear that males received a higher overall grade with a no homework than females.

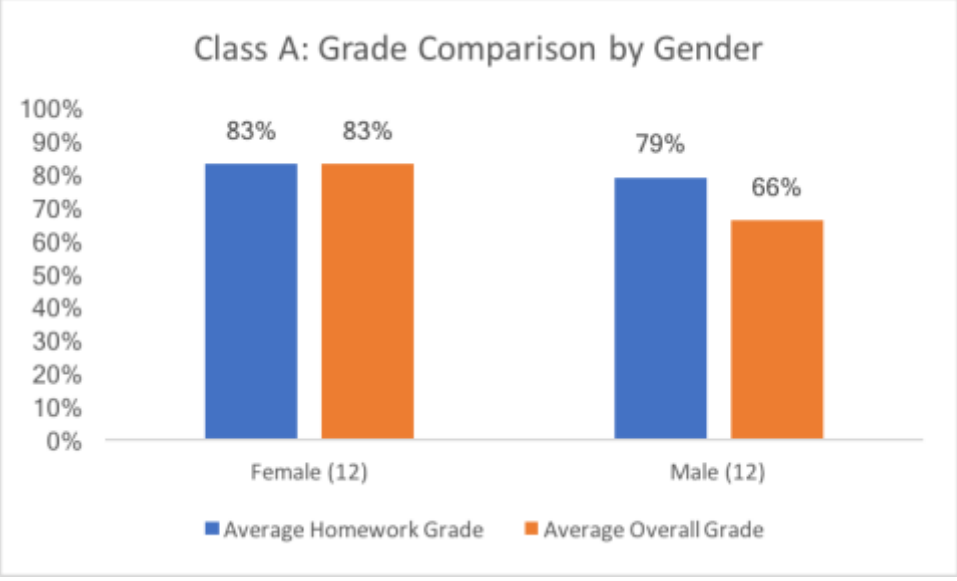

Figure 4. Class A: Grade Comparison by Gender

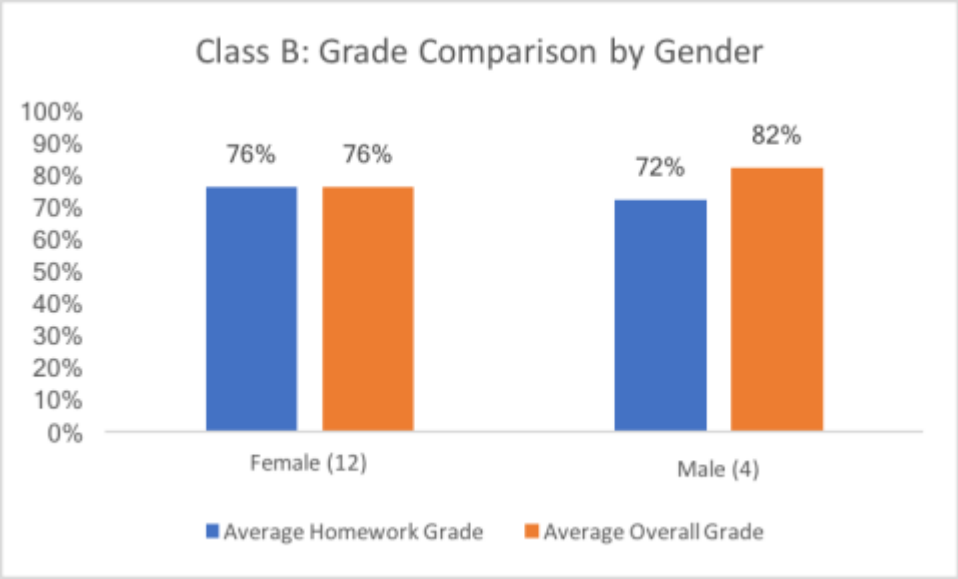

Figure 5. Class B: Grade Comparison by Gender

When it comes to different learner types, the average homework grades and average overall grades of students with Individualized Educational Plans (I.E.P.s), 504s, and English Learners were examined. Since Class A did not have any students with 504s, only English Learners and students with I.E.P.s were studied. Both learner types did not show significant differences when each social group's average homework grade was compared to their average overall grade. However, there was a significant difference between English Learners' averages and students with I.E.P.s' averages. While students with I.E.P.s averaged 87% on overall grades and 90% on homework grades, English Learners have averaged 64% on overall grades and 60% on homework grades. So, the homework practices in Class A where more traditional practices and policies were implemented were effective and inclusive for students with I.E.P.s but not for English Learners.

In Class B there was an evident difference between average overall grades and homework grades for both, students with I.E.P.s and English Learners. Students with I.E.P.s averaged at 84% for a homework grade and at 76% for an overall grade in Class B. English Learners also

had a wide gap between percentages with 84% for an average homework grade and at 78% for an average overall grade. This difference posits that the lack of a homework policy as practiced in Class B was not effective for English Learners or students with I.E.P.s and was, therefore, not inclusive.

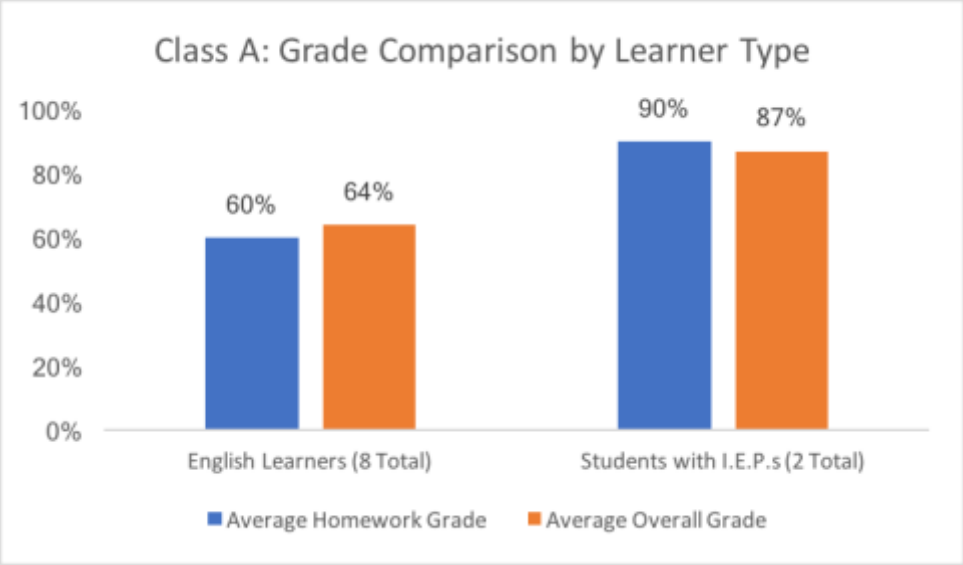

Figure 6. Grade A: Grade Comparison by Learner Type

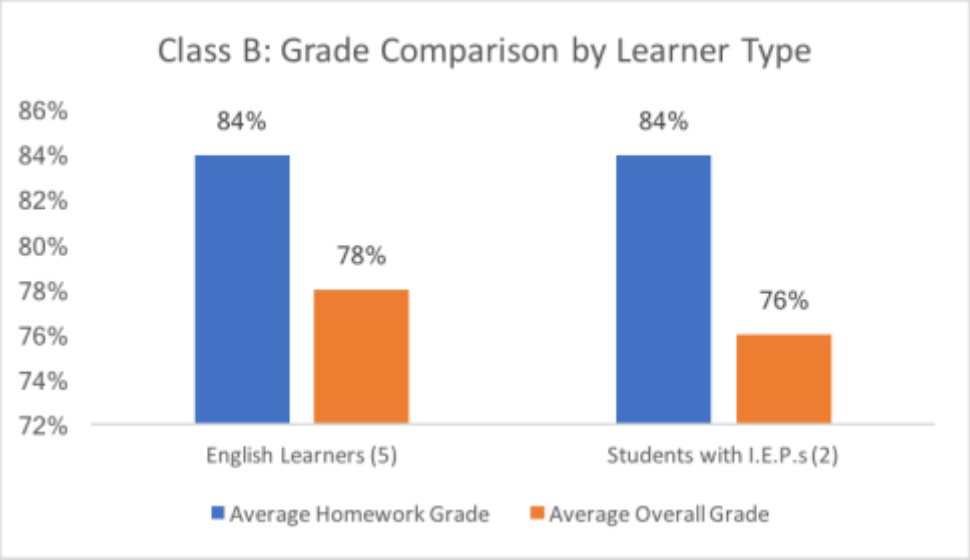

Figure 7. Grade B: Grade Comparison by Learner Type

When answering the research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom?, the data showed that generally Class B's no homework policy was more effective and inclusive than Class A's homework practice and policy. With the exception being for English Learners and students with I.E.P.s, the lack of homework as practiced by Class B allowed most social groups to successfully align their homework assignments with the learning goals of the class. There could be several reasons that contribute to the lack of success for certain social groups, but this would require further study.

Motivation and Expectations of Adolescent Students

When looking at the motivating factors in completing homework, the average homework participation rates were examined in both classes. This was done by looking at the assignments within the progress reports and finding the percent of assignments each student received a grade on out of the total number of assignments per class. It is important to note that this percentage reveals the average of how many students participated in all the assignments within the grading period; receiving all the points possible for an assignment or receiving a portion of the points possible were both deemed participating and, therefore, were included in the averages. It was determined that Class A had nine homework assignments throughout the duration of the progress report. Since Class B does not assign homework, all "Assignments and Participation" that a student could take home and finish or refine was included adding up to a total of five assignments throughout the duration of the progress report. Class A had an average of 62% for a participation rate and Class B averaged at 85%. These results suggest that students were more motivated to participate in the assignments in Class B where there was a no homework policy and assignments were generally completed during class time. The responses to student interviews shed some light on the possible reasons behind these results.

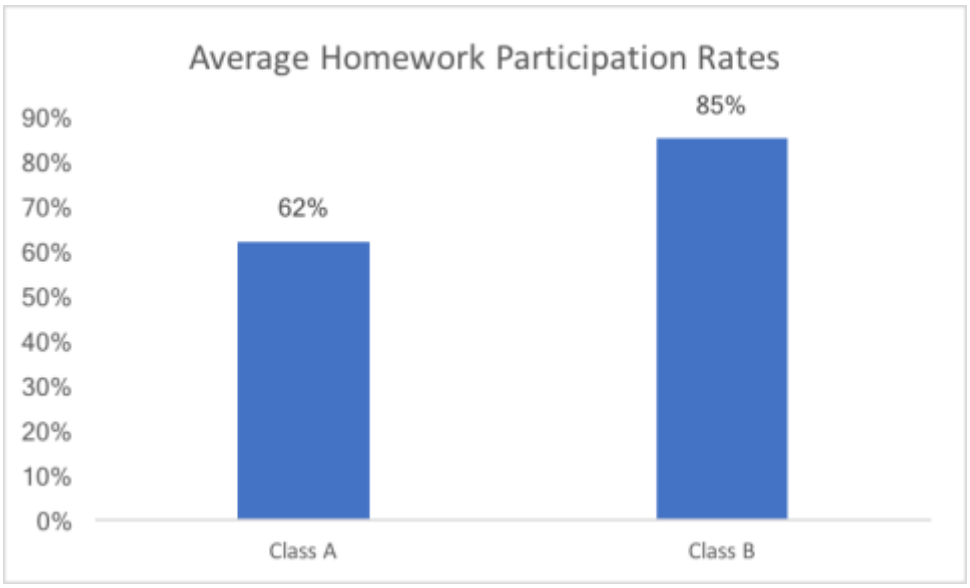

Figure 8. Average Homework Participation Rates

To determine motivation and expectations of students, student interviews were also conducted. Seven students from each class were selected by the researcher to be interviewed; this selection process ensured that the pool of students interviewed would mirror the demographic of the two classes' demographics. Of the students interviewed, 50% were White, 36% Latino, 7% Black, and 7% Asian. 43% of the students interviewed were male and 57% were female. The researcher was unable to include a student with a 504 in the student interviews, however, 36% of the students interviewed were English Learners and 14% had an I.E.P.

The student interviews revealed that when it came to a student's ideal homework assignment, most students preferred an assignment that took 15-20 minutes or 20-30 minutes. Not all the students responded with these exact ranges, but may have answered with a number within a range. For example, Student 1 responded that his ideal assignment would take 20 minutes therefore he was placed in the 15-20 minute range.

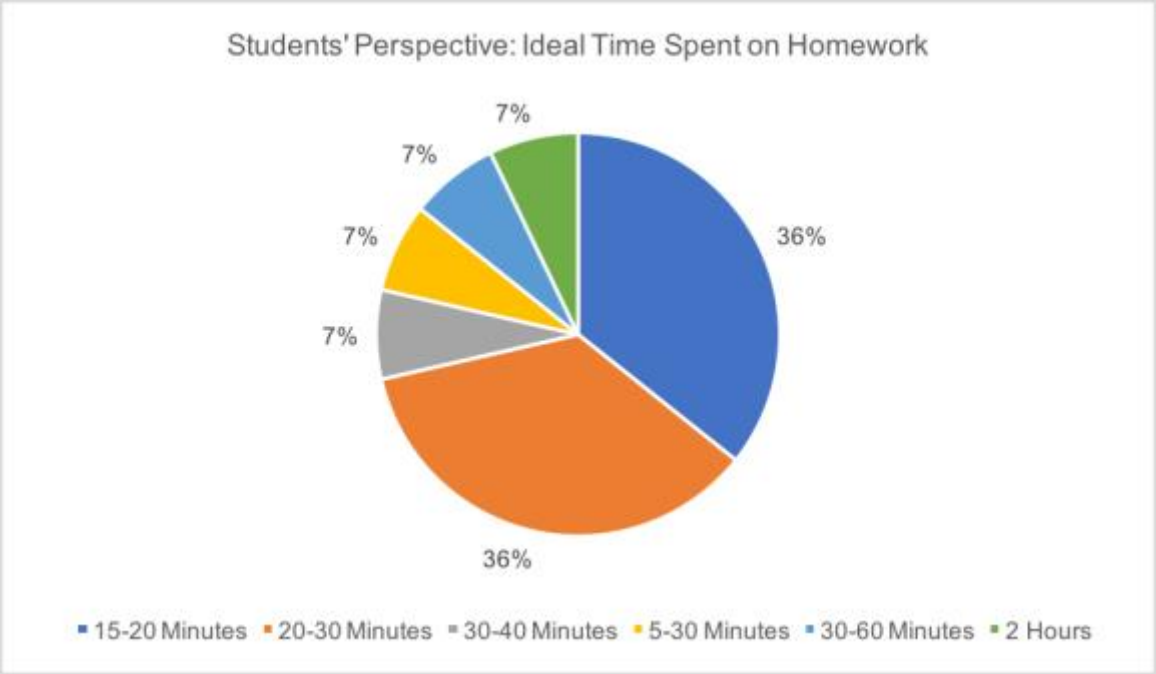

Figure 9. Students' Perspective: Ideal Time Spent on Homework

Furthermore, many of the students ideally wanted their assignments to include some type of writing. 30% of students preferred writing, 25% favored answering questions in review of reading or content from the class, 20% preferred an assignment that required them to study by reviewing the text or notes, 15% of students would rather take notes from a text, and only 10% preferred to read. Since the interview questions were open-ended, many of the students expressed different types of writing they preferred with the common theme being that they preferred to write. Hence, these responses were grouped and coded as "write" in the analysis.

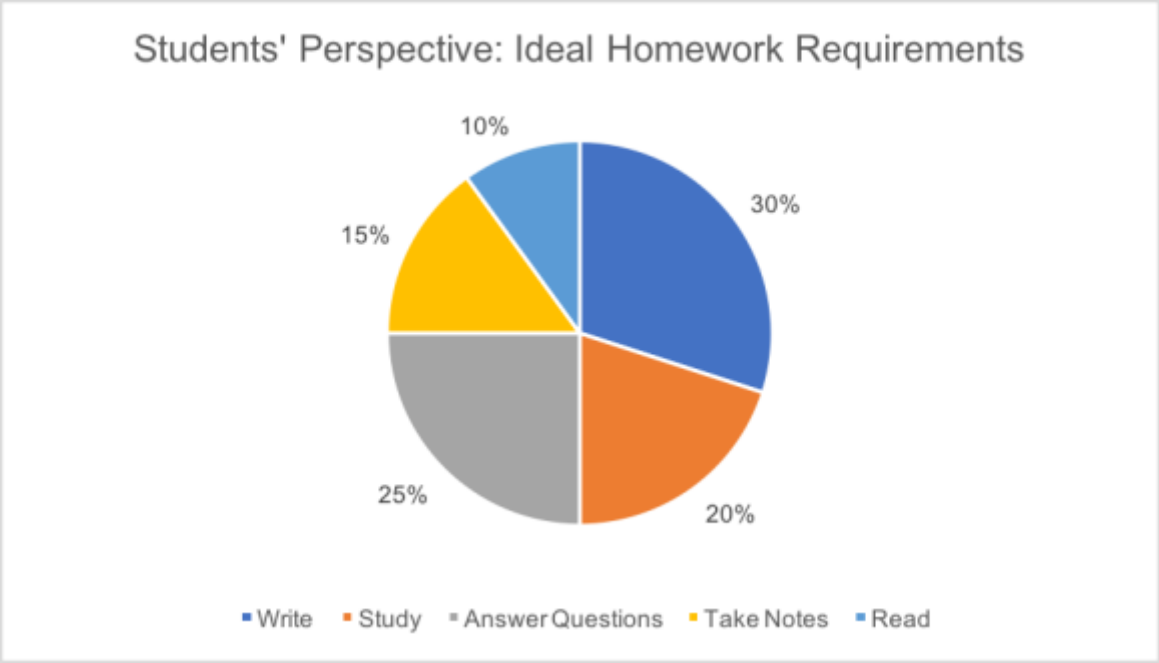

Figure 10. Students' Perspectives: Ideal Homework Requirements

When students were asked about what ideally motivates them to complete an assignment, it was found that many of them were extrinsically motivated. A majority of students (56%) were ideally motivated by the grade they received for completing the assignment. It is notable that some of the students stated that the grades were important for external reasons (i.e. to play sports). Seventeen percent of students were intrinsically motivated by the idea that they were learning from the assignment. Eleven percent of students expressed that they were motivated to complete an assignment by just knowing that it was complete and the task was fulfilled. Another 11% of students stated that were motivated to complete homework if it was relevant to them or they just enjoyed the class (this was coded as self-interest). Only 6% of students were motivated by their parents to complete their homework. Regardless the reasons behind the motivations, grading was the dominating motivating factor behind why students complete their homework.

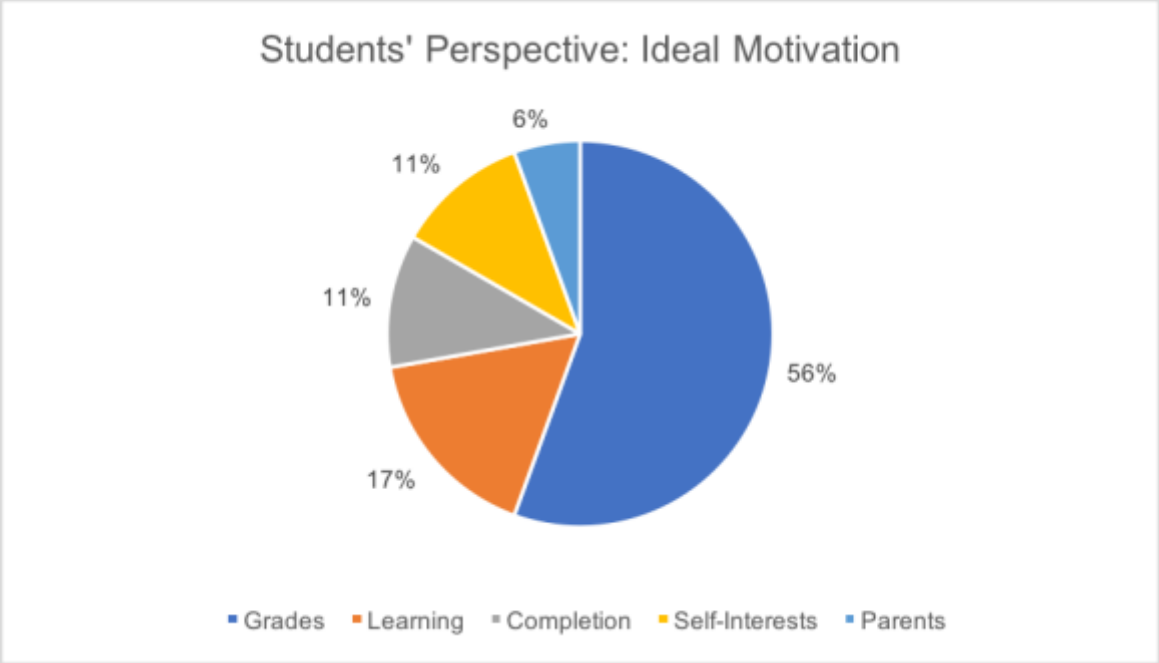

Figure 11. Students' Perspectives: Ideal Motivation

As can be seen in Figure 12, many of the students preferred their grades to be a completion grade. This meant that 62% of the students want their teachers to give them credit for completing an assignment whether the work completed was correct or incorrect. Forty percent of students expressed that they would rather have their teacher give them a grade based on the accuracy of their work. Many of the 62% of students who stated that they preferred to receive a completion grade also expressed that teachers often encouraged them to fix incorrect responses once feedback was received.

Figure 13 shows that many students preferred feedback in written form. 50% of students stated that they ideally wanted written feedback, 25% stated verbal feedback was preferred, 13% of students did not want feedback at all, 6% of students wanted peer feedback and another 6% of students wanted feedback via a rubric. Students who discussed written feedback in their interviews also talked about teachers providing constructive feedback wherein the teacher would provide students with specific suggestions for improvement. For example, Student A5 stated

that, "…they told me, "Oh, a better explanation would be this" and they would break it down for me."

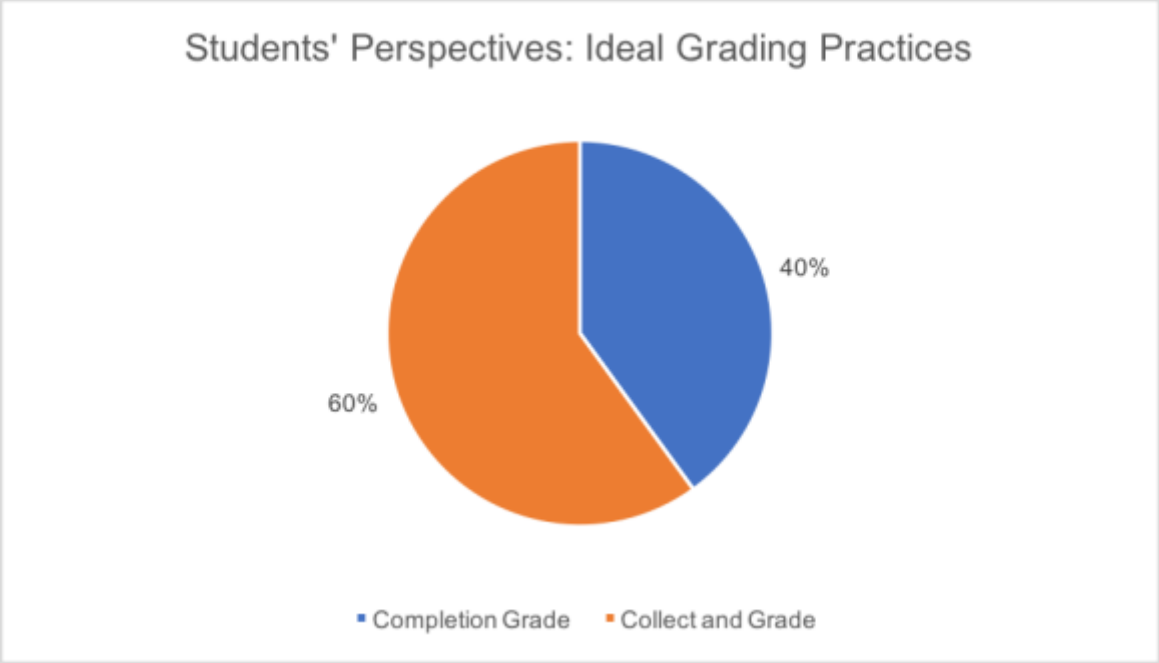

Figure 12. Students' Perspectives: Ideal Grading Practices

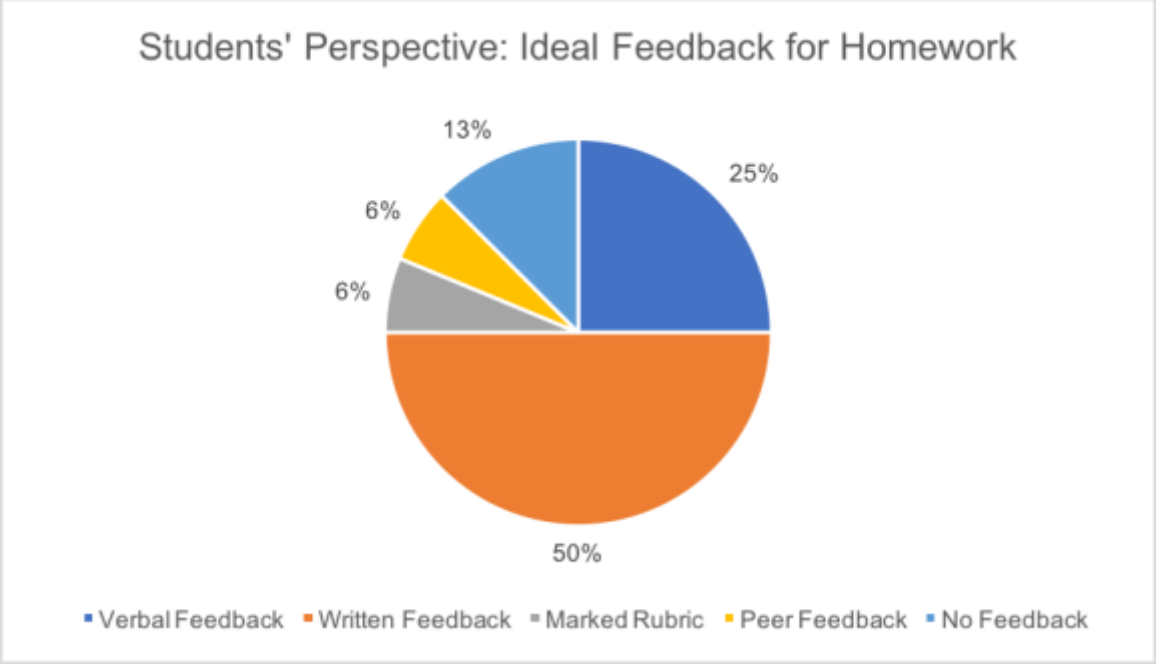

Figure 13. Students' Perspectives: Ideal Feedback for Homework

When it came to the resources student preferred, the Internet was the go-to resource with 48% of students stating it to be the ideal with the textbook coming in the second most preferred at 28%. The Internet being the preferred resource was not a surprising response since it allows students to independently learn and it is generally accessible to most students. However, this was an interesting finding when examining the responses in Figure 17 and noting that "Lack of Technology" was found to be a disadvantage of teachers assigning homework.

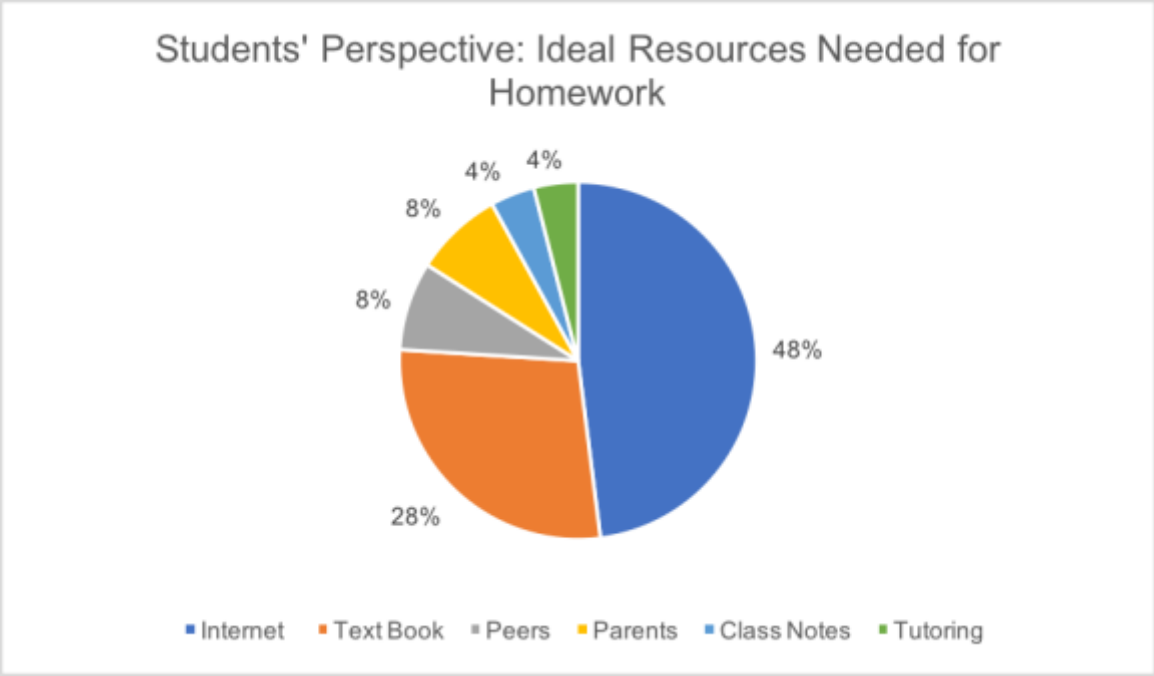

Figure 14. Students' Perspectives: Ideal Resources Needed for Homework

During student interviews, it was also found that 80% of students expected homework to prepare them for the assessments in their classes. This is noteworthy when keeping motivations in mind. If students have a certain expectation of homework and this expectation is not met, they may find the homework assignment to be less motivating or relevant to their learning.

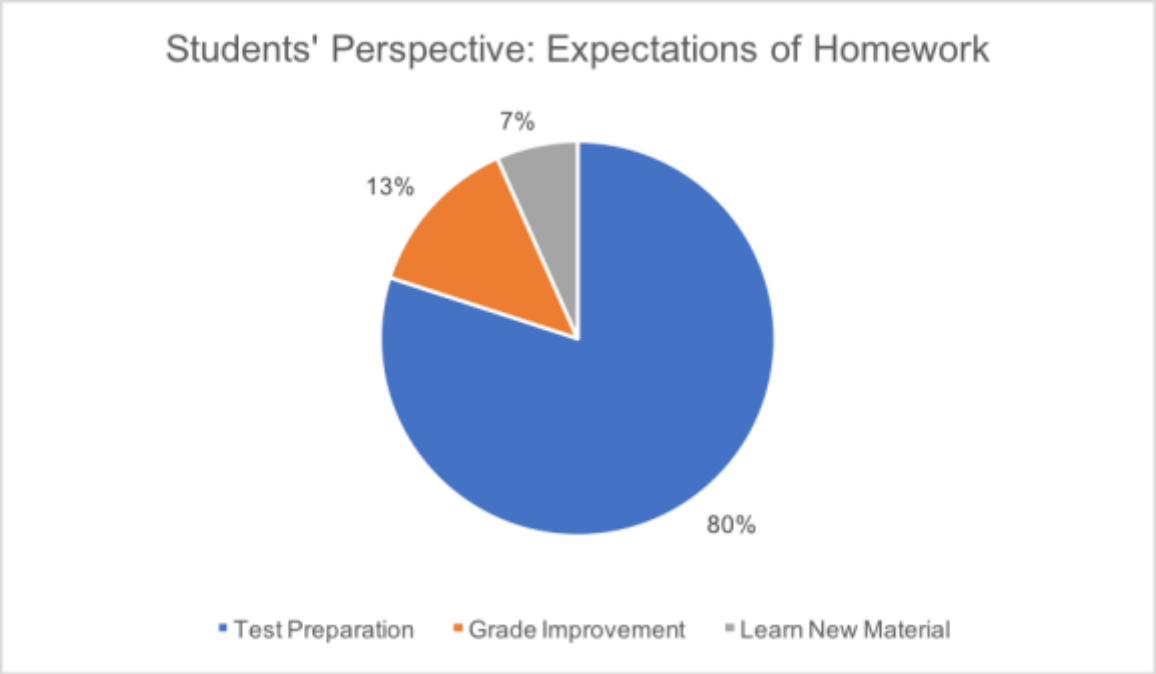

Figure 15. Students' Perspectives: Expectations for Homework

When asking students what they found to be disadvantageous about homework, 69% stated that the amount of time it took was an issue for them. Figure 16 shows that there were other disadvantages students found to homework (i.e. the potential homework has to lower their grade, not know how to complete an assignment without guidance, not having the technology to complete certain assignments, or finding homework to be meaningless to the learning), but the majority of students found that homework consumed too much of their time. Given the findings for inclusive homework practices, this would be interesting to further investigate alongside the different social groups.

Furthermore, Figure 17 shows that 44% students found the act of gaining knowledge to be the advantage of homework. Since many students stated that homework allowed them to gain understanding of the material, this was coded as "gaining knowledge," whereas 19% of students gained gratification from practicing material they already knew or understood and 13% of students appreciated when homework allowed them to prepare for future learning. While all of

these categories reveal that students found the advantage of homework to be some form of learning, these students gained satisfaction of their learning in different capacities.

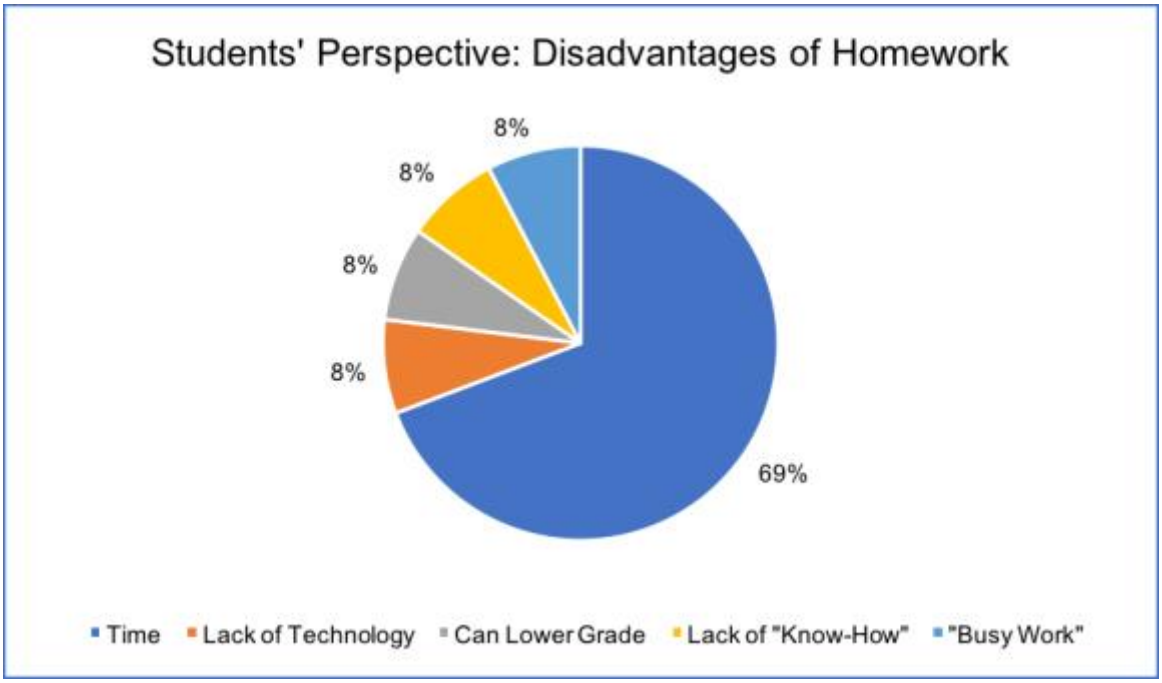

Figure 16. Students' Perspectives: Disadvantages of Homework

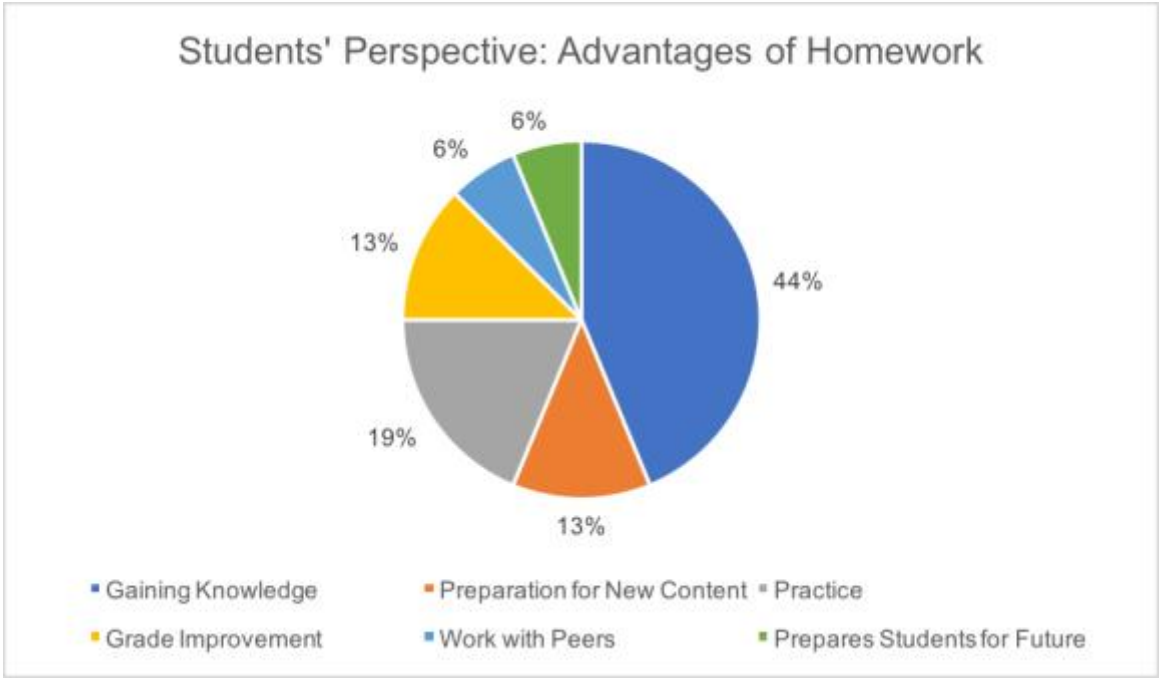

Figure 17. Students' Perspectives: Advantages of Homework

In summation, when answering the research question: 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?, it becomes clear that students preferred a short assignment that is mindful of the students' time and expectations. Students ideally appreciated the learning that happens with homework. Furthermore, despite the form in which students preferred feedback, the consensus was that students were motivated by the learning that the feedback process provided. This was evident by the responses students gave when asked about the grading and feedback policies they preferred.

Interpretation

The results of this case study were analyzed with inferential statistics. By determining the averages of overall grades and homework grades in each class, the researcher could deem different homework practices effective or ineffective. If there was a discrepancy of six percent or greater between averages, this was considered a notable difference since the traditional grading scale breaks grades down in five percent increments (i.e. 100% is an A+, 95% is an A, 90% is an A-, etc.). Since several of the students from both classes did not submit parent consent forms, many students were not a part of the study. Many of the students who did not participate in the study were either male, Latino students, or students with Individualized Educational Plans. Since the classes were chosen to represent the overall population of the research site, having these students opt out of the study meant the results did not fully reflect the general population. Additionally, both classes had large populations of White and Latino students, but only one Black student each and one Asian student in Class B only. Because this would upset the averages for the overall grades and homework grades since there is only one student being compared to larger groups of students, the Asian and Black percentages were omitted. Moreover, it is important to note that the averages in grades and performance could contain wide

ranges in scores. For example, when looking at the average overall grade among females in Class B, the average was 78%, but students' overall grades ranged from 43% to 91%.

Also, the interview findings of this case-study were found using in vivo coding for the student interviews. After student interviews were conducted, answers were transcribed and categorized by common themes or answers. Many of the answers in student interviews revealed common themes, but the open-ended questions left the students to explain their responses with more depth leaving some of the responses open to interpretation. For example, when asking Student A3 what motivated him to complete an assignment, he responded, "Well, the grade obviously, but it depends on the prompt. If it interests me then I'm going to give it my all." This was coded as "self-relevance," but could have been interpreted as the student being motivated by grades as well.

Additionally, when asking students about the resources they commonly used for homework, answers often widely varied making it difficult to code the responses. This was most clearly seen in the interview with Student A4 when the student responded that they used their textbook and Internet. This posed two problems; the first being that this question allowed multiple responses with equal value to the data. This required the researcher to consider all responses, not just one per student interview when compiling the results. The second problem was that the response "Internet" was unclear. Internet could have been referring to a general search engine (i.e. Google) or a specific online resource that the teacher recommended (i.e. the teacher's school website).

Summary

To determine the results of this case study, averages of overall grades and homework grades were calculated and charted. For future studies, a larger pool of students would be needed

as many students chose not to participate potentially skewing the results. The findings were determined using teacher and student interviews. Open-ended questions were used in student interviews enabling more room for open-interpretation and making in vivo coding more difficult at times. Overall, this study did capture two vastly different homework practices in classrooms with similar populations and revealed a lot when examining the research questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect a student's motivation in completing their assignment?

This case study found that Class A used a more traditional approach to homework by assigning 30-minute homework assignments weekly that reviewed the learning that had already taken place. This homework practice was determined less effective and inclusive with a seven percent difference between average homework grades and overall grades. Furthermore, there was a significant discrepancy between social group's performance in homework and overall grades. Contrarily, Class B used a less traditional approach with homework wherein homework was not assigned. Students could take classwork home if more time was needed or they wanted to refine their work from class that day. This homework practice was determined to be more effective and inclusive since average overall grades and homework grades aligned closely and most social groups were comparatively successful with this practice.

Regardless of the homework practice or social group, grades were found to be the most motivating factor for students. Additionally, students ideally preferred to learn what they did wrong in their work with an explanation from their teacher as a form of feedback. These findings and results open a discussion regarding how homework should be implemented depending on the population in the classroom. More implications and value of the findings are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Thesis Recommendations

As research on homework explores the hindrances and benefits of homework, it fails to conclusively investigate effective and inclusive homework practices and policies (Brock, Lapp, Flood, Fisher, & Tao Han, 2007; Daniels, 2011; Eren & Henderson, 2011; Haas, 2008; Milner, 2012; Sallee & Rigler, 2008). To gain insight on different homework policies and practices that are already implemented, this study examined two high school teachers who taught within the same content and at the 10th grade level. The teachers were first interviewed to gain an understanding of the two different homework implementations and then 40 students' grades were analyzed to find which practices were more effective and inclusive. A stratified sampling of students was interviewed to find common themes in students' perspectives on motivating factors of ideal homework practices.

Using this mixed methods approach, the researcher was able to address the research questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments? This chapter discusses a summary and interpretations of the findings and results, implications to the field of education, limitations, and further research possibilities.

Findings Summary

In the first class observed, the teacher, Teacher A, utilized a more traditional homework practice as she assigned an average of 30 minutes of homework a night at least once a week. Her purpose behind assigning homework was to "maximize instructional time" and generally consisted of students taking chapter notes from the textbook or finishing an assignment that wasn't completed during class. Chapter notes would receive a completion grade wherein a

student would either receive full credit or no credit depending on the completion of the work. Other assignments where Teacher A was looking at the quality of the work were graded with either a rubric, written feedback, or verbal feedback was provided to the student. In Teacher A's gradebook homework was labeled as "Formative Assessments," which was worth 35% of the students' overall grades and could be revised for a higher grade throughout the semester.

When progress report grades were averaged and compared to average homework grades, Teacher A's homework implementation showed a discrepancy of 7% suggesting that this homework practice and policy did not align with the learning goals of the class and was, therefore, less effective for the students as a class. When these averages were broken down by ethnicity, it was found that the homework practice did not show much discrepancy between average overall grades and average homework grades within the ethnic groups. However, when the averages are compared between White students and Latino students, there is a wide gap between percentages. White students' average homework grade was 81% while Latino students averaged at 63% for homework grades. This disparity in grades indicated that the homework policy and practice in Class A was not inclusive among ethnicities, therefore responding to the first research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom?

When it came to inclusivity between genders in Class A, it was found that the homework practice was effective for females since the averages for homework and overall grades had no differences. This was not the case for males, however, since there was a disparity of 13% between males' average overall grades and homework grades. This suggested that males are not connecting the learning that is taking place with their homework to the learning goals of the class.

Grades were also analyzed by learner type to determine if the homework practices and policies of Class A were inclusive of English Learners and students with Individualized Education Plans Programs (I.E.P.s). The results showed that students with I.E.P.s performed well with a traditional homework practice as they averaged at 87% in homework and 90% in an overall grade. On the other hand, English Learners performed remarkably lower with Class A's homework implementation. While the average homework grade, at 60%, and the average overall grade, at 64%, were close in range of one another, these averages were significantly lower than the averages for students with I.E.P.s and the grade and homework averages for the whole class. Since the average homework grade for all Class A was 81%, but for English Learners it was 60%, this homework practice is not considered inclusive for all learner types. When responding to the first research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom?, it appeared that the homework policy and practice in Class A are effective and inclusive of students with I.E.P.s and females, but not for males or English Learners.

In Class B, the teacher did not assign homework. Instead, Teacher B assigned independent practice as classwork. If a student felt the need to refine their work or needed extra time, they were free to take their classwork home. This would take no more than an extra 5-10 minutes of their time and would often require them to complete a writing task that they received guidance on during class. They received grades on their assignments with a rubric that was designed specifically for each assignment by the students. This rubric allowed them to receive a 1, 2, or 3 (with a 1 being incomplete, 2 being proficient, and 3 being mastery) in Teacher B's gradebook and could be revised by a student for a higher score throughout the semester. These assignments were input as "Assignments and Participation" and were worth 25% of the grade.

When examining the average homework and overall grades of Class B as a whole, it was found that the homework practice was effective. Since the average homework grade was 75% and the average overall grade was 78%, these similar percentages suggest that the homework practice aligned with the learning goals of the class, hence answering the research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? It was noteworthy, however, that the average homework grade was higher in Class A than in Class B showing that students were more successful with their homework in Class A with a more traditional homework policy and practice.

When the grade averages from Class B were studied by ethnicity, it was determined that the homework practice was ineffective for both Latino and White students as social groups. Also, since Latino students' average homework score was 83% and White students' average was 72%, there is too much of a discrepancy to consider the homework practice in Class B to be inclusive. Conversely, when the averages were broken up by gender, it was found that Class B had an effective homework practice for females with no difference between homework and overall grade averages. Males, on the other hand, had a 10% difference with a higher average in overall grades than in average homework grades. It is also noteworthy that females averaged 76% as a homework grade in Class B while males averaged 72% as a homework grade. Since males performed with the discrepancy in averages, Class B's homework practice and policy was deemed to be not effective for males, but since the homework averages were similar to that of females it is an inclusive practice.

When grade comparisons by learner type were examined, it was found that there was a disparity between homework average grades and average overall grades for both English Learners and students with I.E.P.s suggesting that the homework implementation in Class B is

not effective for either learner type. However, both learner types showed similar averages for homework grades and overall grades; these averages were also higher than the averages found for Class B as a whole, demonstrating that the homework implementation is inclusive. In short, when responding to the first research question: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? Class B's homework practice and policies is inclusive for all social groups except among ethnicities. Moreover, while the homework was effective for the class as a group, it was generally not effective for the social groups when they were broken up by ethnicity, gender, and learner types.

To answer the second research question: 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?, students' motivations and expectations were measured through average participation rates in each class and through coded student interview responses. It was found that Class B had a higher participation rate than Class A when it came to working on the assignments. This demonstrated that students might be more motivated to participate in independent practice when it is done as classwork with the option to take it home rather than when it was assigned as strictly homework.

Students voiced their preferences on homework during interviews, stating that they favored assignments that took 15-30 minutes of their time and would prepare them for the tests in their respective classes. Many students expressed that time was the biggest disadvantage to homework while the advantage was the gaining of knowledge or learning. Additionally, many students were motivated by how homework helped their grade and preferred this grade to come in the form of a completion grade, otherwise known as credit or no credit. Even though more students preferred a quick credit or no credit grade rather than having a teacher collect and grade

the homework, many students also wanted the teacher to put in the time to provide written or verbal feedback.

Finding Interpretation

When researching different homework implementation practices for a diverse group of students, it was found that not assigning homework and instead allowing students to choose to work on their assignments at home if need be was overall more effective. While many researchers have suggested that not assigning homework is beneficial for different reasons, the findings from this study were eye opening since none of the homework policies and practices observed were effective nor inclusive for all social groups and learner types. The interpretations of the findings will be discussed within the following three themes that were discovered within the findings and results: homework as it relates to learning, inclusivity in homework, and adolescents' motivation.

Homework as it Relates to Learning

The data from this study demonstrated that implementing a homework policy that does not require homework, like Class B, but allows each student to complete their work during class and offers the option to take this work home to finish or revise is generally more beneficial for students. The data analysis showed that for Class B the average overall grade was 78% and the average homework grade was 75%. Since Haas (2008) asserted that homework should be assigned with the learning objectives in the forefront on the teacher's mind, having similar percentages, such as Class B does, suggested that the homework and learning goals are aligned deeming this homework practice effective.

Since the students in Class B were completing most of their assignments in class, it was noted that most of their work would be aligned with the learning since it was assigned and

mostly completed directly after that day's lesson and learning objectives were carried out. In Teacher B's interview, she stated that if the lesson was "strong enough" and the lesson plan was "well thought out," then extra learning after class in the form of homework was not necessary. This concept paralleled Sallee and Rigler's (2008) position that when meaningful and purposeful independent work is assigned, instructional time is more efficiently used. This is beneficial for both student and teacher as time is an element that neither wants to waste.

Students expressed their concern about wasting time when asked what the disadvantage was to homework from their perspective; 69% responded that time was the main disadvantage. Time is a valid concern for students especially as they enter middle school and high school and the demands of students become more exacting. This point is further supported by Daniels (2011) who found that the pressures that students experience during adolescence is taxing as students have multiple teachers who assign homework, extracurricular activities to participate in, and familial responsibilities to undertake.

Even though not assigning homework was a successful implementation for Class B, when students were asked what their ideal requirements would be of a homework assignment, student interviews revealed that 30% responded that they preferred to write, and 25% responded answer questions. More than half of the students preferred an assignment that required them to mentally interact with the learning. In other words, students preferred the challenge of articulating their knowledge through their assignments rather than reading and retaining information. According to Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011), this type of assignment allows students to learn best since the students is reading about and experiencing the learning. Whichever type of homework policy or practice a teacher chooses to employ, thinking about effective homework assignments for all social groups is crucial in maintaining equity and access.

Inclusivity in Homework

In Class A, where a more traditional approach to homework was practiced, White students performed well with an average homework grade of 81% and an average overall grade of 82%. Unfortunately, Latinos in Class A performed remarkably lower with an average of 63% in homework and 67% as an overall grade. While Class B had smaller achievement gaps, Latinos still received an average homework grade that was ten percent higher than their average overall grade. Since both classes were United States History classes, it does raise the question of whether the content was relevant for all ethnicities. As Valenzuela (1999) posited, curricula often require all students to value the content without regard to the students' culture, interests, or backgrounds. In a school with such a diverse population, many students may not have connected or found the curriculum of U.S. history to be relevant to their own culture, interests or background. Furthermore, as schools implement Common Core State Standards and history classes focus more on reading and writing strategies, opportunities for educators to devalue students' native language and resources become more frequent (Hernandez & Daoud, 2014).

This literature also supported the findings when learner types were examined in Class A since all the English Learners in this class were Latino. In Class A, English Learners did poorly with the traditional homework implementation as can be seen when comparing English Learners' average overall grades at 64% to the average overall grade of the class at 74%. This discrepancy in percentages built on Sallee and Rigler's (2008) commentary regarding the amount of time an assignment may take depending on the different factors with which each student contends. In other words, if an English Learner does not have prior knowledge of U.S. history, the assignments for a U.S. history class may take them an extended period of time when compared to their peers.

Contrary to Class A, even though English Learners in Class B had a discrepancy between their homework grades and their overall grades, English Learners performed remarkably higher than Class B as a class. Where English Learners scored an average of 84% in homework, the overall class averaged 81%; English Learners earned an average 78% as an overall grade, the whole class averaged at 74%. Because Class B did not assign homework and has students work on assignments during class where a teacher is present to assist, this may be viewed by the students as the teacher valuing their time and need for help.

Another learner type that was examined was students with I.E.P.s. Like Feldman, Carter, Asmus, and Brock (2016) emphasized, integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms allows them the opportunity to enhance their learning and socially interact with their peers without disabilities. This case study affirmed that this integration was beneficial to students with I.E.P.s regardless of the homework policy or practice. Students with I.E.P.s were successful in both Class A and Class B. Since Class A practiced a homework implementation that is traditional and likely to be similar to other teachers' homework implementation, students with I.E.P.s may have found homework to be a routine, something that maximizes students with learning disabilities' academic performance (Scheuermann, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2009). Even though Class B did not have a traditional homework practice, not having homework at all for students with learning disabilities appeared to decrease the stress and anxiety that homework can induce for some. Mayes and Moore (2016) reported that students with learning disabilities are more likely to experience stress and anxiety, which explained why students with learning disabilities performed well in homework and overall grades in Class B.

As the data were reviewed, Haas' (2008) statement that "one size does not fit all" was further affirmed when looking at inclusivity in gender. Females performed well with both a

traditional homework policy and a no homework policy. Both homework practices were also inclusive for males, but males had a noteworthy difference between their average overall grades and homework grades in both classes. When males received a traditional homework practice as they did in Class A, their homework averages were higher than their overall grade averages. For Class B, the inverse was the case showing that neither homework practice was effective for males.

The differences in gender performance and needs aligned with the research of Lenroot and Geidd (2010) who reported that the brain development is quite different between males and females during adolescence. They contended that the difference in development also leads to differences in strategies when completing similar cognitive abilities. This is to say that while females make the learning connections between their independent practice or homework and assessments, therefore making different homework practices effective for them, males do not make this connection as easily.

Adolescents' Motivation

Class B's no homework policy received higher participation averages than Class A's traditional homework policy, which aligns with the research on adolescent motivation and brain development. Not assigning work outside of class time does allow the teacher to guide students in prioritizing their tasks, and this is something that students need to be taught, but are often left to figure out on their own (Daniels, 2011). Furthermore, as students complete work with the guidance of a teacher, they are more likely to find a reasonable balance between the challenge and their skill level that Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory asserts creates motivation in learning (Beard, 2015). On the other hand, when completing work independently at home where mistakes and unanswered questions may lead to discouragement and defeat, a student can become

disengaged and lose motivation. Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory also upholds that providing immediate and specific feedback is instrumental in maintaining this motivation, which reflects the findings in the student interviews of this study. Seventy-five percent of students expressed that they preferred feedback from the teacher in written or verbal form.

Moreover, since a person's brain does not reach full maturation until their mid-twenties and therefore does not always make responsible decisions or think consequentially, asking an adolescent student to work on independent practice during what the student would otherwise see as "free time" does not align with their cognitive capabilities (Chamberlin & Chambers, 1991).

Contrary to the findings and results of the teacher interviews and grade collections, student interviews showed that 80% of the students stated that they prefer homework assignments that prepared them for tests. They also preferred assignments where they would receive a completion grade along with feedback and would take 15-30 minutes. Listening to students' preferences when developing and implementing an assignment is crucial to increasing motivation (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Furthermore, implementing homework can improve academic performance, which strengthens students' academic self-perception (Ariës & Cabus, 2015; Nye, 1998; Trautwein, Schnyder, Niggli, Neumann, & Ludtke, 2009).

Implications

When an assignment is created, whether it is to be taken home or completed in the classroom, a teacher should be mindful of what her students want and need from an assignment. Without encouraging students to express their opinions and attitudes, the classroom becomes one-sided wherein the educator is asking all students to find importance in material that does not have relevancy to the students. When students are encouraged to use their voice in creating homework policies and practices there will be motivation, higher achievement, and

inclusiveness. Furthermore, when the completed assignment is brought back by the student, a connection between the assignments and the learning goals need to be transparent so that the student may find relevancy in the material. This connection enables the assignments to be effective and raises the academic achievement of students.

Additionally, educators need to be mindful of the time that students spend on homework for each class and be aware of the pressures this may create for an adolescent. Since the purpose of education is not to hinder students, it is important that educators implement assignments that engage students' learning while also fostering their needs. It appears that Class B's policy of allowing students take home independent work to complete or refine was a practice that kept in mind the students' learning needs and respected their time restraints outside of the classroom.

It is also critical that educators are made aware of adolescent brain development and are provided with the resources to create meaningful and purposeful assignments for their students. This means that professional development needs to be made available to teach educators about brain development. Teachers should also be trained on the technology they have access to so that they may find ways to disseminate meaningful and purposeful assignments in an effective and inclusive way.

Moreover, since every student is different and this study did not encapsulate every attitude and opinion of homework, teachers should also consider distributing a survey at the beginning of each semester to find what students' expectations and attitudes are regarding independent work. Questions from this study's student interviews could be used or modified for the survey. It is suggested, however, that there be a clarifier of this difference between feedback and grades. This feedback from students can prove itself to be invaluable as the year progresses and students feel they are being listened to and have input in their learning.

Limitations

Having a class that is not used to receiving homework or having due dates bring back parent consent forms in a timely manner proved to be a challenge and a limitation. Because many of the consent forms were not returned, many of the students' grades were not included in the averages, which may have skewed the results and findings. Many students who did not return their parent consent forms were Latino males. Since males and Latinos were groups that the research examined closely, the results may have been an inaccurate representation of Class B's homework policy and its actual effectiveness and inclusiveness among males and Latinos. Another factor that could have limited the data is the use of averages which did not always accurately represent the outlier students. For example, when calculating the average for Class B's White students, the average homework grade came out to 72%, but the grades ranged from 41% to 98%.

It would also have been beneficial to the study to include more classes with different homework practices. This would have provided more input on different effective and inclusive homework practices. Furthermore, because the researcher works at the research site, this insider positionality potentially affects the findings, results, and interpretations of this study as the researcher has worked closely with both teacher participants and has previously taught a few of the student participants. However, to avoid bias during student interviews, these students were not selected for student interviews.

Conclusion

Considering how eye opening it was to hear students' input on homework practices and policies, it would be valuable for future research to explore a wider variety of homework implementations. While the two homework practices that were examined revealed a lot, it would

be beneficial to find more homework practices that are inclusive and effective for different social groups. When answering the research questions: 1) What does effective and inclusive homework look like in the classroom? and 2) How does homework policy and feedback affect students' motivation in completing their assignments?, this study did find that even though the traditional homework practice in Class A was effective and inclusive for female students and students with I.E.P.s, the no homework policy in Class B was more inclusive for all participants except when examined within ethnicity groups.

Additionally, listening to students' opinions and attitudes regarding homework policies and practices does contribute to higher academic achievement. In this study, many students voiced that if a teacher is going to assign homework, shorter 15-30 minute assignments that receive a completion grade and verbal or written feedback are preferred. This was the student feedback from this study, though, and it is important to keep in mind that each classroom dynamic and each student's opinion differs. So, enabling students to express their own views and preferences through a survey, quick write, or other resource is critical. In order for this to be effective, though, one would have to be completely cognizant of their attitudes toward their students and be open to modifications with the idea that homework should be aligned to the learning goals of the curriculum and inclusive for all social groups. As reported by Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011), the teacher and their practices do matter.

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Appendix A: Email to Teachers

Hello All,

I am currently in the Masters of Ed Program at CSUSM writing my thesis on homework practices. I need to work with 2-3 teachers that all teach the same grade and content (10th grade History CP). My chair and I have put together a methodology that keeps it simple. It entails me asking you, the teacher, some questions to document your homework policy and beliefs, interviewing some of your students one-on-one regarding homework, and then documenting student's' first semester grades (pseudonyms will be used for all participants). I will be comparing different homework practices among different teachers, so I am trying to get 2-3 teachers with varying homework policies. In order to ensure this, would you please send me a description of your homework policy as it is stated in your syllabus. If you do not assign homework, please send me a description of your independent work policy as stated in your syllabus. Copying and pasting from your syllabus is fine.

I know this is minimal information, so let me know if you have questions or concerns. Otherwise, let me know if it would be okay to use one of your History CP 10 class periods to use for my thesis. If you do not want me using your class in my thesis, I completely understand. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Antonina Moreno

Appendix B: Teacher Consent Forms

Dear Teacher,

My name is Antonina Moreno and I am a student in the Masters of Education Program at California State University San Marcos. You are invited to participate in a research study to explore various homework practices in the classroom. You were selected as a possible participant because you teacher History 10 College Preparatory and have a unique homework practice to your colleagues. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

STUDY PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study is to look at different homework practices and examine which practices motivate students to complete assignments and/or receive higher grades.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of two teacher participants and 70-80 student participants who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following:

- Answering some questions in an interview that will be audio recorded to document your homework policy and beliefs. This interview will take place in the privacy of your office and should take approximately 15 minutes.
- Allowing me to interview some of your students one-on-one regarding homework. There will only be seven students interviewed one time each. They will be taken out of the classroom to answer some questions in the privacy of an empty room. This should take approximately 15 minutes.
- Allowing me to document student's' first semester grades (pseudonyms will be used for all participants). Both, semester grades and homework grades will be examined and recorded.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:
There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:

- Your interview responses being kept confidential.
- You having the time to be interviewed.
- You having to do extra planning to allow me to speak to your students.

SAFEGUARDS:
To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

- You will choose a time convenient for you and your students to be interviewed.
- You may choose a time that doesn't require you to do extra planning or loose instructional time when I come in to explain the study and assent/consent forms to your students.
- All interviews will be held in a private room.
- All responses to the interviews will be recorded on a password-protected device that will be erased upon completion of my thesis.

- Answers will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used.
- Participants can skip any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering while taking the survey or during the interview.
- Participants may be directed to school counseling or the school psychologist.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your responses will be confidential, as pseudonyms will be used to protect all identities. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with your school site.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
There are no direct benefits to participation in this study; however, your participation will allow educators to gain a better understanding of what motivates student learning and higher academic achievement.

INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND SIGNATURES:
If you have questions about the study, please call me at (760) 290-2000 ext. 3812 or e-mail me at moren085@cougars.csusm.edu. . You may also contact my advisor, Erika Daniels, at 760-750-8547 or via email, edaniels@csusm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:
By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

Please check the option that applies to you before signing:

☐ I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.
☐ I do not give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Signature	Print Name	Date

Appendix C: Parent Consent Forms

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Antonina Moreno and I am a student in the Masters of Education Program at California State University San Marcos. I am conducting a research study to explore various homework practices in the classroom. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for your child to participate in this research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:
The purpose of this study is to look at different homework practices and examine which practices motivate students to complete assignments and/or receive higher grades.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree for your child to participate in the study, she or he will possibly be interviewed (only a handful of students will be interviewed from each class) during class time, but outside of the classroom. They will be asked 5-10 questions during the interview that will gauge what they find to be meaningful and helpful homework assignments. This interview should take no more than 15 minutes. Once interviewed, students' grades will be collected for data from their teacher's grade book. These grades will be looked at to measure their academic achievement and how this achievement relates to the homework policy in the class. This study will only last a total of a couple of weeks.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:
There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:

- Students may feel uncomfortable with their grades being used in a study.
- Students will lose 15 minutes of class time if they are selected to be interviewed.

SAFEGUARDS:
To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

- All grades will be kept confidential where only their teacher and I (also a teacher at San Marcos High School) will have access to their grades.
- All data will be kept on a password-protected computer.
- The data will be deleted by erasing the digital files once the project is completed.
- Students that are selected to be interviewed will be interviewed during a time that is scheduled with their teacher to ensure they miss minimal instruction.
- The student may skip any activity as part of the research.
- The student may be directed to counseling or social support services.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your child's responses will be confidential, as pseudonyms will be used to protect all identities. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be used.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any time; there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade, treatment/care, etc.) Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is educators will gain a better understanding of what motivates student learning and higher academic achievement.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND SIGNATURES:
If you have questions about the study, please call me at (760) 290-2000 ext. 3812 or e-mail me at moren085@cougars.csusm.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Erika Daniels, at 760-750-8547 or via email, edaniels@csusm.edu. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this research or if you feel your child has been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child to participate in the above study and for the researcher to have access to your child's grades.

Please check the option that applies to you before signing:

☐ I give permission for my child's interview to be audio recorded.
☐ I do not give permission for my child's interview to be audio recorded.

_____
Your Child's Name

_____	_____	_____
Your Name	Your Signature	Date

Appendix D: Student Assent Forms

My name is Antonina Moreno. I go to school at California State University San Marcos. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about different ways of assigning homework. Your parent(s) know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of the study is to look at different types of homework and examine how homework can motivate students academically. You are being asked to take part in the study because I would like to look at students in the high school setting in a class that fulfills the A-G Requirements.

What do I need to do?
If you decide to be in the study, I will interview a handful of students from each class that is being observed. The 5-10 interview questions will only take 10-15 minutes of your time. You will be interviewed during class time at a time that is convenient for you and your teacher. I will conduct these interviews outside of the classroom so as to keep your answers confidential. I will also be looking at your grades from the first semester to analyze relationships between homework grades and final grades. These grades will be kept confidential, as the grades will be presented with pseudonyms.

What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?
Taking part in this study may not have direct benefits to you, but it will help me and potentially other teachers learn what types of homework practices best benefit learners such as yourselves.

Are there any risks to me if I decide to be involved in this study?
There are no foreseeable risks however some kids may not want to miss class time to be interviewed or want anyone to know their opinions of homework. To reduce these risks or inconveniences, interviews will be kept brief and will be held at a time when you are missing the least amount of instructional time as possible. All responses will be kept confidential, meaning I will not discuss your responses with your teacher or classmates and your name will not be used in my research. You can skip any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering while taking the survey or during the interview. If at any point you feel the need, you may be directed to school counseling or the school psychologist.

How will my information be protected?
Your responses will be kept confidential, meaning I will not discuss your responses with your teacher or classmates. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Additionally, data will be stored in a password-protected computer that only I have access to and the data will be deleted three years after the completion of my research.

Do I have to be in the study?
No, you don't. The choice is yours. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. No one will get angry or upset if you don't want to do this. And you can change your mind anytime if

you decide you don't want to be in the study anymore. Participation in the study will not affect your grade.

What if I have questions?

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (760) 290-2000 ext. 3812 or e-mail me at moren085@cougars.csusm.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Erika Daniels, at 760-750-8547 or via email, edaniels@csusm.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

Signing below means that you have read this form, that you are willing to be in this study, and that you are giving assent for the researcher to have access to your grades.

Please check the option that applies to you before signing:

☐ I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.
☐ I do not give permission for my interview to be audio recorded.

Your Name: _____

Your Signature: _____

Name of the Investigator: _____

Signature of the Investigator: _____

Date: _____