

12-2019

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Increasing Awareness of Homework Assistance Resources Among Elementary School Aged
Children

Leslie Castillo

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Increasing Awareness of Homework Assistance Resources Among Elementary School Aged Children

Introduction

Behind a successful elementary student, there is likely a supportive parent. As argued by Green, Walker, Hoover-Demsey, and Sandler (2017), schools have the expectation that parents will provide homework assistance at home in order for their children to be academically successful. However, not all parents are able to do this. For example, immigrant parents may not speak English and may have very little to no schooling. As a result, many of these immigrant parents in the U.S. end up in jobs where they work very long hours for a minimum wage. The parents may also feel incompetent to help their children with homework due to the language barrier and limited schooling. These conditions that surround immigrant families create a unique circumstance where the older siblings are likely to be the ones assisting younger siblings at home (Louie, 2012).

I conducted my capstone project at the elementary school of Mary Chapa Academy in the city of Greenfield, California that services students in preschool through 6th grade. The majority of the student population is comprised of both US born and non-native children of immigrant families from Mexico, and the majority of the community is part of the working class of the agricultural industry. I conducted a workshop with a class of 6th grade students to inform them of the free homework assistance resources available at school and in the community and that provided tips on how to ask for homework help.

Needs Statement

It is assumed that homework is an important component of elementary students' education. However, researchers debate on whether or not homework assistance is crucial for children's achievement (Barnard, 2004; Bempechat, 2019; Robinson & Harris, 2014). Englund, Luchner,

Whaley, and Egeland (2004) argue that homework help may still be consequential for the academic and emotional well-being of students. Furthermore, DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2005) have found that at a very minimum, parental involvement with homework fulfills school expectations, and in turn has implications for the manner that school staff treat students. In contrast, Bempechat (2019) noted in the literature review that it has been difficult for research to fully determine whether homework itself is the link to academic success or if it is the quality of parental support instead. One thing remains certain: homework remains an important component of the children's education.

Schools have an expectation for parents to provide homework assistance at home to assure that their child is academically successful (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). However, among immigrant families, parental homework assistance is not an easy accomplishment because the parents work long hours of hard labor. By the time these parents make it home, they are likely exhausted and still have important tasks to take care of, such as dinner and meal preparation for the next days' work meal. In addition, many immigrant parents do not speak English and they likely had very little schooling (Louie, 2012). Being English proficient and understanding the expectation to actively support children at home beyond the school day are important components for parents to have to effectively assist their children with homework. Unfortunately, due to poverty, many children in Mexico are forced to drop out of school before they reach the 6th grade in order to contribute and help provide for their family. Therefore, children in immigrant families are not receiving enough parent support and assistance with their homework in comparison to nonimmigrant households. According to the website, Child Trends (2018), it is projected that immigrant families will make up about one third of the American population by the year 2040. As immigrant families are a large and growing population, it is important that we

address the needs of these immigrant children who are very unlikely to receive assistance with their homework at home.

There is a study that was conducted by Lanuza (2016) that exclusively took a look at only immigrant families. The study included Latino immigrant families, and compared their results to current findings of non-immigrant families to address part of this lacking issue. They found strong evidence that there was less parental assistance with homework among the immigrant families and part of it was due to their lack of resources and situational circumstances such as lack of English proficiency. As a result, children in immigrant families will likely seek help from extended family members, such as aunts or uncles, or seek help from adults outside the home, such as school staff (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). According to Louie (2012), immigrant children are also likely to rely on older siblings for homework help or they will try to do the best they can on their own. It is for this reason that I find it important to extend resources in homework assistance to the children of the Greenfield (CA) community in order to help them gain the support they need to succeed in their education.

Theory and Development

In the 6th grade, children are between the ages of 10 and 11. According to Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, 6th graders can be placed in the later state of the Concrete Operational Stage, which covers the ages of 7 to 11 years old (Piaget, 1976). According to Piagetian theory, children in this cognitive development stage are able to think more critically and understand logic compared to younger children. At this stage, they are able to think best when there are concrete materials involved, as opposed to abstract thought that develops in later stages. To accommodate the students in this developmental stage, my workshop includes discussions and partner activities to give the students a perspective from their view and from the view of others

along with the dialogue. I have also included a sheet that lists the homework resources for students to follow along and to keep as a reference for resource information.

Elementary school is the place where education begins for most students and is the place where fundamental skills begin to take place and develop. Getting the resources for these students of immigrant families who lack parental support will help guide them toward establishing good habits, such as homework completion, that can pave the way toward later college skills.

Consideration of Diversity

The majority of children at Mary Chapa Academy are immigrant children. Their parents likely immigrated to the United States to escape extreme poverty in Mexico and to provide a better future for them. Unfortunately, the majority of the parents who are immigrants have little to no schooling and as a result have very little options in employment. These immigrant families have no place to go but into the agricultural fields that do not have an education requirement nor have a requirement to speak English. These parents end-up working in the toughest jobs for the lowest wages in the nation, working long hard hours in the agricultural fields. This situation leaves the parents exhausted, with little time of the day to invest in their children's education, not because they do not want to, but because they are worn out and oftentimes feel inadequate to help their children in their academic activities. For these reasons, I have aimed my project to address the need of homework assistance that likely lacks in the home of these children of Mexican immigrant families.

The older children of the Mexican immigrant families are likely to be helping their younger siblings at home with their homework. This is likely because their parents do not speak English and had little schooling, as opposed to children who have the support of an English speaking and educated parents. Lanuza (2016) conducted a longitudinal study that included Asian and Latino

children of immigrant parents and found that the older children in these households were not receiving help from their parents when it comes to homework and that these older siblings were like the ones helping their younger siblings in contrast to white native born households.

According to the Annual School Accountability Report Card published during the 2017-18 school year, of the 896 student population of Mary Chapa, 99% were Hispanic, 95% were socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 79% were English Learners. My project is geared toward targeting the upper grade students who likely do not have someone at home to help them with their homework and who may also be assisting their younger siblings. The workshop will provide the students with information, who can use the free resources for themselves and also to help their siblings with homework.

Learning Outcomes

I conducted a one-day workshop among 6th grade students ages 10-11 years old where they were able to gain knowledge of free resources for homework assistance. The sources will support the upper grade students and allow them to support their siblings with homework at home. The learning outcomes of this workshop were as follows:

1. Increase students' awareness of the free resources at school.
2. Increase students' awareness of the free resources in the community.
3. Students will gain skills or tips on how to ask for help.

Method

Participants

The workshop took place at the elementary school of Mary Chapa in the city of Greenfield. The school population is over 98% Hispanic with 100% of the students qualifying for free lunch. The participating audience were 26 sixth-grade students between the ages of 10 and 11 years old.

Of the 26 students, 14 were male and 12 were female. There were 25 Hispanic students and 1 Asian student. 24 students were bilingual Spanish speakers and 2 were English speakers.

Procedures and Materials

I first reached out to the principal and assistant principal of Mary Chapa with an email informing them of my desire to conduct my capstone project. After approval, I reached out to the sixth grade teachers via email. Of the 4 teachers that I reached out to, I was only able to confirm participation from 1 teacher.

The one-day, 45-minute workshop was conducted on Friday, October 25th at 2:30 P.M. at Mary Chapa Academy in Greenfield, California, where I first introduced myself to the class and let them know why I was there. Then I asked the class to raise their hand if they have homework most nights of the week and as expected, all raised their hands. I then asked the students if they knew where to go or how to get help with their homework. After allowing 5 minutes for students to participate and share their knowledge, I handed out a list with information on free homework assistance resources at school and in the community. See appendix A.

I led a 5-minute discussion of where and how students could access the free resources at school. After, I had the students do a 5-minute partner exercise where each partner would take a turn and tell the other of the free resources they have at school.

I then presented the students with the information of where to seek free homework help outside of school and provided examples of when a student might need homework help and not be able to get it at school. For this section, I asked for a student to participate in my scenario for a discussion. The student served as the example in the scenario for the class to discuss and provide information. I reminded the students to reference their handout to make suggestions of where to go for help. The following scenario was provided:

It is the weekend and the student (referenced the participating student) needs help with their homework. Where can we suggest for them to go for help?

After about a 10-minute discussion, I transitioned the students to think about a situation where they may not be confident in asking or seeking the homework resources. I provided another scenario to present tips that students could use if they experienced trouble asking for help. The following scenario was provided:

The student (referencing another participating student from the class) is shy and does not feel confident to ask their teacher for help with their homework. What tips can we give them to get the help they need?

As comments came up, I led a discussion for about another 10 minutes of the workshop and I added to the discussion when students failed to suggest a variety of tips on how to ask for homework help.

To end the workshop, I provided about 10 minutes for students to ask questions while encouraging the class to provide the answers. I then gave the students a questionnaire that was comprised of 4 true or false questions and 1 open ended question. See appendix B. This questionnaire served to measure the learning outcomes.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that students would have increased awareness of the free resources at school. To assess this learning outcome, questions 1, 2, and 4 of the post-questionnaire were used. This learning outcome was almost fully met. There were 90% of the students who answered correctly for question 1. There were 80% of the students who answered correctly for question 2, while 100% of the students answered correctly for question 3. Over 2/3rds of the students were able to identify free homework assistance resources available at school. See Table 1 for scores.

Learning outcome 2 was that students would have increased awareness of the free resources in the community. Questions 3 and 4 of the post-questionnaire were used to assess this outcome.

This outcome was fully met. There were 100% of the students who answered correctly for question 3 and 4. All of the 26 students were able to correctly identify free homework assistance resources available in the community. See Table 1 for scores.

Learning outcome 3 was that students would gain skills or tips on how to ask for homework help. Question 5 of the post-questionnaire was used to assess this outcome. The outcome was almost fully met. There were 80% of the students who provided an answer that corresponded with the tip of suggesting to ask someone you trust or feel comfortable with to help you in getting the homework help you need. Over 2/3rds of the students provided a correct tip on how to ask for homework help. See Table 1 for what they answered.

Discussion

I believe my project was successful in increasing student's awareness of free homework assistance resources in school and in the community. The students also demonstrated knowledge of tips on how to ask for homework help. Learning outcomes 1 and 3 were almost fully met, while learning outcome 2 was fully met. The participants were engaged throughout the workshop. Having different components in the workshop (such as a handout of resources, partner exercises, and group discussions led by student oriented scenarios) allowed the students to learn. As the students are in Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage, they are more sophisticated thinkers and able to think from the perspective of others, which allows them to take what they learned and use it for themselves, to assist siblings, or share the information with others.

The limitations of the project were that I received participation from only 1 of the 4 6th-grade classes I reached out to. Also, there were limitations in the content in that there were very limited free resources available for the students within the community. For future work, I would like to focus more on recruiting participants. In efforts to recruit participants, I would also reach

out to 5th grade teachers. I would also like to open the workshop for parents and children combined and offering a workshop in Spanish to accommodate parents who do not speak English. I believe that providing parents with the information of the available resources will empower them in feeling competent in being able to help their children with homework. Lastly, I would like to work on establishing a homework center within the school district where students can go to get the homework help they need.

The project successfully included all of the students, except that I assumed everyone likely helped a younger sibling with homework. 1 student was an only child and another student said they only had older siblings. However, I believe I was able to include all the participants by letting them know that the information they learned was for them and to share with any other person that may need help with their homework.

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*Table 1**Percentage of students who answered correctly for each post-questionnaire question*

<i>Question:</i>	<i>Percent Correct:</i>
<i>Question 1</i>	90%
<i>Question 2</i>	80%
<i>Question 3</i>	100%
<i>Question 4</i>	100%
<i>Question 5</i>	80% <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 77% gave the tip to ask a friend or a teacher for help (asking someone they are comfortable with)● 3% gave the tip to be brave or not be shy.

*Appendix A**Free Homework Assistance Resource Handout*

Free Homework Help

Here is where to go:

At school

- **After School Program (A.S.E.S.)**
 - Your parents must sign a form and register you.
 - Space is limited and it is not guaranteed you will get in right away.
- **Your Teacher**
 - Your teachers are always available to help you.

In town

- **Community Center** (Patriot Park): 1351 Oak Ave.
 - Your parents must register you.
 - **Tuesday:** 3:30-5:30pm, **Wednesday:** 2-4pm, **Thursday:** 3:30-5:30pm
- **Greenfield Library** (Homework Center): 315 El Camino Real
 - **Tuesday:** 2-7pm, **Wednesday:** 1:30-6:30pm, **Thursday:** 1-6pm
- **Greenfield Library** (Online Site): www2.co.monterey.ca.us/library/
 - Sign up for a free library card to access more!
 - You only need your school ID. No parent required!

*Appendix B**Post-Questionnaire*

Homework Resource Questionnaire

1. May I ask my teacher for H.W. help?

YES

NO

2. May I get H.W. help in the Afterschool Program (A.S.E.S.)?

YES

NO

3. May I go to the Greenfield Library or Community Center for H.W.?

YES

NO

4. Do these services cost money?

YES (A LOT!)

NO (FREE!)

5. What is a tip you would give to a friend who is having trouble asking
for H.W. help:

Festival Presentation Slides

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Human Development & Family Studies

Why is homework help significant?

- **Homework remains an important aspect of education:**
 - Schools expect parents to provide homework help at home for the children to be academically successful (Green, Walker, Hoover-Demsey & Sandler, 2017)
 - Successful homework completion may have positive effects:
 - *Increase self esteem*
 - *Time management*
 - *Responsibility*
 - *Perseverance*

Needs Statement

- Greenfield community: Mary Chapa Academy
 - Immigrant/Hispanic/Indigenous (95%)
 - Limited education
 - Do not speak English
 - Agricultural workforce
 - Long laborious hours: **10 hrs daily, 6 days a week**
- Children of immigrant parents do not have someone at home to help them
 - Older siblings are likely to be helping younger siblings with homework (Louis, 2012)

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

- Piaget's Theory
 - Suggest that children progress through 4 stages of mental growth
- 3rd stage: Concrete Operational Stage
 - 7-11 years old
 - Critical thinkers
 - Logical thinkers
 - Sophisticated thinkers
 - Able to think from the perspective of others

Learning Outcomes

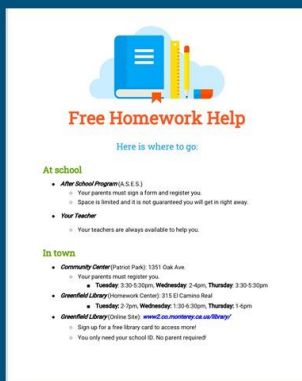
1. Increase students' awareness of the free resources at school
2. Increase students' awareness of the free resources in the community
3. Students will gain skills or tips on how to ask for help

Methods: Audience

- **Location:** Mary Chapa Academy in Greenfield
- **Participants:** 1 sixth-grade class
 - 26 students
 - 10-11 years old

Project Delivery:

- Workshop:
 - Handout with a list of resources
 - Group discussion
 - Partner Exercise



Assessment Method

- Post-Questionnaire

Homework Resource Questionnaire

1. May I ask my teacher for H.W. help?
YES NO

2. May I get H.W. help in the Afterschool Program (A.S.E.S.)?
YES NO

3. May I go to the Greenfield Library or Community Center for H.W.?
YES NO

4. Do these services cost money?
YES (A LOT!) NO (FREE!)

5. What is a tip you would give to a friend who is having trouble asking for H.W. help:

Results

LO 1: Increase awareness of school resources

<p>1. May I ask my teacher for H.W. help?</p> <p>YES NO</p>	Partially met:	90% for question 1
<p>2. May I get H.W. help in the Afterschool Program (A.S.E.S.)?</p> <p>YES NO</p>		80% for question 2
<p>4. Do these services cost money?</p> <p>YES (A LOT!) NO (FREE!)</p>		100% for question 4

LO 2: Increase awareness of community resources

<p>3. May I go to the Greenfield Library or Community Center for H.W.?</p> <p>YES NO</p>	Fully met:	100% for question 3
<p>4. Do these services cost money?</p> <p>YES (A LOT!) NO (FREE!)</p>		100% for question 4

LO 3: Gain skills or tips on how to ask for help

<p>5. What is a tip you would give to a friend who is having trouble asking for H.W. help: _____</p>	Partially met:	80 % =
<p style="font-family: cursive; font-size: 1.2em;">ask your friends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask someone you trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ friend ○ teacher • Be brave 	

Discussion: Successes

- The students were engaged in the discussions
- They asked questions regarding the resources
- Overall it was a successful workshop

Discussion: Limitations

- Only 1 of 4 Sixth-grade classes participated
- *Despite the limitation the workshop worked well with the group of students*

Positive Note

To not be shy or I could go and help them.

me and I will help her with her H.W.

Thank you!

Questions?
