HOMEWORK HELP IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Literature Review

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Homework In Afterschool

Literature Review

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OVERVIEW

One of the goals of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning is to build local capacity to provide rich academic content through engaging and enriching activities. Our work is based on the premise that afterschool programming should extended and support learning beyond the activities and resources of the day school. In order to do this, programs must understand and develop the attributes that make the uniquely qualified to support learning and achievement.

Due to the limited body of research on homework in afterschool this literature review focuses on homework practices and outcomes within the afterschool context, however the emerging field of homework literature and research is largely been focused on the quantity, completion, and academic improvement. While the most common instructional purpose of homework is to provide the student with an opportunity to practice or review material that has already been presented in class (Becker & Epstein, 1982), this review will consider research across the spectrum related to how to establish space, create support networks, develop skills, and monitor progress of homework during the afterschool.

INTRODUCTION

Homework has been a staple in American schooling for many years. Homework can be defined as academic work assigned outside of the normal class period to extend the practice of academic skills to other environments (Cooper, 2001; Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, trends have swayed positively and negatively towards homework and its place in American schooling (Cooper, 2001; Hong & Milgram, 2000; Simplicio, 2005). Regardless of the beliefs of teachers, parents, students, and administrators, the homework assignment remains a constant practice in American schools. With more pressure to seem rigorous, schools are assigning homework to give students more opportunities to practice work..

Epstein (1988) provided several reasons why students are assigned homework. Some of the functions are manifest in that they are direct reasons for homework. Some of the reasons are latent functions in that they are results homework assignment. The most common reason teachers assign homework is to help students master basic concepts. Homework can have positive impacts on student achievement and provide many other educational benefits for students. It can assist students with developing good study habits and help students recognize that learning can occur beyond school. Homework can foster responsible character traits and independent, life-long learning (Cooper, 2000). Homework can also give parents an opportunity to see what's going on in school, serving as a vital link between schools and families.

According to Cooper (2004), there are several benefits to homework. The repetitive nature of some homework helps students to retain facts and master the basic skills they need to proceed to higher level thinking and concept formation. Homework also adds enrichment to the curriculum. There may not be enough time within the school day to do additional enrichment activities; homework can fill that void. Homework can also accomplish the goal that many educational entities have, creating lifelong learners.

Most researchers have found that students who complete homework assignments have higher academic grades than students who do not complete homework assignments (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Cooper & Valentine, 2001; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). The importance of completing homework as students advance in school seems to increase as students get older (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Cooperal, Valentine, Lindsay, & Nye. (1999) found that "the average high school student in classes doing homework outperformed 75% of the students in no-homework classes. In junior high school, the average effect was half this magnitude. In elementary school, homework had very little effect on achievement gains" (p. 369). Muhlenbruck, Cooper, Nye, & Lindsay (2001) tested reasons why the correlation between homework and achievement is weaker at elementary than at secondary. They found evidence to suggest that "teachers in early grades assigned homework to develop young students' management of time …" and these assignments were more likely to "review class material." However, "secondary school teachers more often used homework to prepare for and enrich class lessons" (p. 295). Understanding that not only do secondary students who do homework have improved academic performance, they

also have improved self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005) aids with programming for the students in lower and upper grades.

Role of Homework in Afterschool

Afterschool programs can play an important role in assisting students to successfully complete their homework assignments. This can be done best when afterschool programs do more than set aside time and space for homework completion. They can also actively assist students in acquiring the organizational, management, and study skills that lead to homework, and overall academic success. Afterschool staff can work with day school teachers to expand the definitions of what homework might be such as field trips, projects, and cross-aged group assignments.

While there are multiple reasons to include homework in afterschool, one of the main goals is to improve academic achievement of the students in the program. Cooper, Robinson, & Patall (2006), in a meta-analysis of homework students in the United States from 1987 through 2003, found that there is a positive correlation between homework and achievement. Related goals include providing students with an opportunity to practice or review materials already presented in class (Downs, 2005; Connors, Costello, Jackson, Murray, & Ratchford, 2003); preparing students for new materials that are to be covered in class (Muhlenbruck et al.., 1999); and extending or applying learning to new situations (Connors et al., 2003; Muhlenbruck et al., 1999).

Some of the main things that afterschool staff can do to help facilitate academic homework is to reinforce the work that students do during the regular school day (Downs, 2005), by becoming

familiar with the state standards or frameworks and have an understanding of each students' academic progress indicators such as standardized test scores and grades. Standardized test scores and grades can indicate areas of strength and areas that need improvement through specialized help. As a part of academic homework support, many afterschool programs offer tutoring and mentoring services. Afterschool tutoring programs that help students with academic work report an increase in achievement for students who participated on a regular basis (Bender, Giovanis, & Mazzoni, 1994).

Infusing academic content and homework into afterschool programming works because students who do homework have improved academic achievement (Cooper et al., 2006; Glazer & Williams, 2001; Cooper et al., 1999), positive adult relationships (INCRE & NIOST, 2005), increased self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005), and take personal responsibility for their own learning (Glazer & Williams, 2001). Glazer and Williams (2001) further state afterschool activities that are directly related to achievement (e.g., homework) foster positive identification with school (e.g., extracurricular activities) or both have positive influences on achievement. Afterschool providers who seek to help students succeed in school should focus on activities that relate directly to learning—interactive and comprehensive homework help and academic enrichment.

Parents seem to have gotten the message that student academic achievement is correlated to homework completion and most parents want students to do academic homework in afterschool (Duffett & Johnson, 2004). Ann Duffett and Jean Johnson (2004) report in *All work and no play?* Fifty-six percent of minority parents and 52% of low-income parents surveyed said, "An

afterschool program that provides supervised homework time is something they would go out of their way to find" (Duffett & Johnson, 2004, p.13).

Homework has multiple purposes, and this review highlights research on creating optimal homework environments, practices related to tutoring and skill building, monitoring and communicate about student progress, and involving day school, families and communities.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the literature search process was to conduct as broad search as possible in order to yield studies, articles, and resources related to homework and programming in afterschool. The search was completed between November 2007 and March 2008 and the majority of the publications were published between 1991-12008.

While the homework field is emerging, there is a very limited selection of studies addressing homework in aftercshool. Due to the limited research base, the search covers research about practices that are applied during homework that have their own extensive and unique literature bases.

Databases such as ERIC and PsycINFO were searched using combined key words relevant homework and afterschool. Both the results of the search, as well as reference lists from the resources located, were used to provide support for the toolkit development. The World Wide Web and predetermined websites deemed likely to have information related to homework and afterschool were also searched and leads to other sources followed. Finally, informal networks of persons with knowledge or expertise related to the subject matter were queried. The final toolkit will have a summary of findings from available resources related to homework and afterschool.

Involving Day School, Families, & Communities

Homework is a powerful link between afterschool programs the day school, and the families, they serve. While research is clear about the benefits of afterschool programs, the outcomes of stakeholders support in providing homework assistance to students have not yet been clearly identified. This section highlights research on engaging stakeholders during homework time and its implications for practice.

Involving Day School

Learning occurs both in the day school and in the afterschool program. While there are differences in the environments, there is value in bridging them (Weisburd, 2004). "Day school" refers to staff members whom provide instruction and leadership to students during the traditional school day. This includes principals, assistant principals, teachers, teacher assistants, librarians, and specialists. The strongest factor in creating this collaboration is the principal. The principal is instrumental in setting the tone for the day school and can encourage teachers to partner with the afterschool program staff. Diedrich, McElvain, and Kaufman (2007) recommend the following strategies be employed by the principal to promote this collaboration: have regular meetings with the afterschool program coordinator; include afterschool staff in school meetings; use professional development time to explain the goals of the afterschool program; develop ways for program staff to communicate changes they notice in student's achievement or behavior; and ask teachers to provide information about curriculum and standards to afterschool program staff.

Although creating linkages between the day school and afterschool programs is a common goal, most programs experience difficulty in achieving it due to varying institutional cultures, staff turnover, and poor communication (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2002). Nevertheless, the majority of research highlights the academic benefits of forging partnerships between afterschool programs and day schools. Diedrich et al (2007) cite that creating a partnership between the day school and the afterschool program provides student support and encourages positive academic results. Henderson and Mapp (2002) identify the following benefits when partnerships exist to support student learning: increased teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents; better reputations of schools within the community; better performance of school programs. While the academic benefits of this partnership are well-documented, additional research on implementation strategies for afterschool staff may prove helpful to assist practitioners to develop collaborative partnerships with day school staff.

Involving Families

In addition to connecting with day school staff, a strong case is made for afterschool programs to adopt practices which encourage family involvement during homework time. A preponderance of research exists to support the link between family involvement and student achievement (Hester, 1989). Family participation in education is twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status (Walberg, 1984). Benefits include: higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales; more classes passed and credits earned; better attendance; and improved behavior at home and at school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Most parents become involved in their child's education through homework (Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Whetsel, Green, 2004). Xu and Corno's (1998) research reveals that homework, when mediated by parents, provides clear opportunities for children to develop important work habits and management strategies. When parents guide their children's homework with helpful and appropriate support, children perform better in the classroom (Walker et al, 2004). Finally, when parents use homework as an opportunity to teach study skills, children are more likely to believe that homework will help them learn (Cooper, Jackson, Nye,& Lindsay, 2001). When parents do not have the skills or the time to assist with homework, afterschool programs can provide the needed support (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001). Afterschool providers can serve as a bridge between the school and the families about student progress on homework (Cosden et al, 2001) by extending professional instruction during homework time and involving parents through multiple means of communication (Policy Studies Associates, 2001).

Diedrich et al (2007) recommends the following strategies for promoting parent and family participation during homework time: visiting parents at home; providing constant communication to parents; helping parents to converse with teachers; instructing staff to be respectful; providing opportunities for parents to supply input; and making resources in multiple languages. Additionally, Kakli, Kreider, Little, Buck and Coffey (2006) identified the following strategies afterschool providers can employ to elicit family involvement: focus on family needs; build trusting relationships by communicating positively and frequently; provide leadership

opportunities for families; create a welcoming environment; hire and develop family-focused staff; and help parents develop skills to advocate for themselves and their children at school.

When seeking family involvement, afterschool programs must be sensitive to barriers which prevent the involvement of family. Barriers, such as meeting the needs of non-English speaking families, low literacy within families, lack of technology fluency, and the inability to attend afterschool events need to be examined to ensure participation is accessible (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002).

Involving Communities

Community involvement refers to partnerships from the surrounding community forged to promote students' intellectual development (Epstein, 1995). Community partnerships can be formed with the following organizations: businesses and corporations; universities and educational institutions; cultural and recreational organizations; volunteer organizations; and faith-based organizations.

Like day school and family involvement, community involvement can help create successful homework environments in afterschool programs by providing resources to aid student achievement (Longoria, 1998). Community collaborations focused on academic subjects have significant and positive effects on students' grades, school attendance, and exposure to career opportunities (Yonezawa, Thornton, & Stringfield, 1998). Additional benefits from community partnerships can include: supplying mentors; sponsoring homework hotlines; supplying volunteers, and/or tutors to assist during homework time; providing homework supplies;

purchasing educational materials; assisting with transportation and sponsoring incentives for student homework completion (Epstein, 1995).

While there are ample benefits for student learning when communities are involved in homework time, it is important to note that community involvement in afterschool programs can become a potential disruption. Afterschool programs must be ready to deal with potential situations when volunteers and / or students and staff interact or when volunteers have no professional obligation to ollow through on offers to assist . To successfully navigate this partnership, afterschool programs must develop operating procedures to support the partnerships and its potential situations (Patterson and Horwood, 1995).

Overall, the research overwhelmingly highlights the academic benefits realized when afterschool programs partner with stakeholders. However, the limitations of the research appear to be two-fold in nature. Little attention was devoted to evaluation methods for afterschool providers to use to determine the strength of the partnerships. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon (1997) discuss the importance for afterschool programs to evaluate the nature of their partnerships to ensure it is of benefit to students. As afterschool programs seek to form these valuable partnerships, having research-based evaluation instruments to gage the strength of the partnerships would be an asset for afterschool providers to determine if the partnership is worthy of the effort and if the partnership produced gains in student learning.

Secondly, for each of the partnerships to flourish, on-going communication is a crucial component. Seppanen, Love, deVries, Berstein, Seligson and Kisker (1993) cite high quality afterschool programs should communicate with stakeholders openly and regularly. While research documents the need for each stakeholder to openly communicate, there is a need for effective communications strategies which can easily be implemented by afterschool programs.

Afterschool programs has the unique ability to bring the day school, families and the community together to support student learning during homework time. Research further indicates these partnerships support student achievement by creating a supportive atmosphere, which increases the likelihood of student success (Boykin, 1994). With additional research on implementation tools and proven practices, these partnerships can support student learning in a more meaningful way.

Managing and Organizing the Homework Environment

Afterschool staff must effectively use time, space, and materials during homework time. The proper management of time, space, and materials ensures that homework time is truly devoted to supporting academic achievement. Staff should develop a consistent schedule for homework time; ensure the space is adequate for learning; and provide the necessary materials needed for homework.

Time is an important element to consider when developing an afterschool program. Scheduling the time to devote to homework in an afterschool program is very important. Establishing and communicating the schedule will allow parents and students to know what to expect. Having a routine plan for the program provides students with expectations for each day. Routines help create safe environments for younger students and reduce behavior problems (Bailey, 2001; NWREL, 2005). If programs devote an hour to homework completion, parents know that if their child has more than an hour of homework, they should complete additional homework at another time. If students know when homework time is scheduled, and the scheduling is consistent, then the students will develop a routine which also helps students with time management and organization.

Devoting set amounts of time to homework contributes to older students' increase in academic achievement. According to Cooper (2001), there is a correlation between junior high students devoting one hour each night to homework and student achievement. For high school students,

there is a positive correlation between the amount of time a student devotes to homework and higher achievement rates. Since most programs do have a homework component, a policy that determines the scheduling of time devoted to homework is beneficial for a more fluid operation of the afterschool program.

Homework time may vary depending on the age and grade level of students, their needs, as well as the program goals. Predictability is important for younger students, as constant changes can create disorder among students and lead to increased behavior problems. Older students my need more flexibility to complete complex assignments or projects. According to the recommendations by the U.S. Department of Education (2002), students in grades 1-3 should have no more than 20 minutes of homework each evening, and students in grades 4-6 should have no more than 20-40 minutes per evening. Afterschool homework time should parallel these expectations. The allotted time in the afterschool program should give them enough time to complete their homework and move onto other activities. This may go beyond providing the traditional homework hour to students, especially considering the recommendation that students in grades 7-9 spend about one to two hours per night on homework and students in grades 10-12 spend 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours per night on their assignments (USDOE, 2002; Cooper, 2001).

Few programs have space specifically devoted to the afterschool program. The goal for afterschool programs is to create a space that will meet the needs for all students. The traditional classroom style setup may not work for all students or all subjects. In an afterschool program studied by Beck (1999), students were successful when they were able to work on their

homework in a "structured *and* autonomous space." While the space was created for the students to do homework, the students decided on the best way for them to do the homework. The goal for this section is for programs to consider the comforts of their students and the variety of homework assignments students receive and use that information to create effective homework spaces that help students focus.

Students can be organized into devoted areas that focus on environment preferences, resources, and homework enrichment activities. Students who need quiet areas can study without being distracted by students who need more active areas. Students who need special materials can access items needed to complete their work. Students who finish their homework before homework time ends need an area where they can be engaged in other activities that support academic learning. Beck (1999) found there was a low level of disruptive behavior by the students who had the structured, yet autonomous space. Having a place designed to fit the needs of the students, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach, reduces behavior disruptions.

Many authors state that the first minutes of homework time are often wasted due to a lack of organization and expectation (Goldstein & Zentall, 2005; Rathvon, 1996; Rosemond, 1990; Schumm, 2005). Materials needed to complete homework assignments should be organized and ready for use each day. It is important for programs to anticipate material needs and to create a well-stocked and organized materials system. This will reduce the number students who say that they are unable to complete their homework due to a lack of pencils, compasses, books, calculators, or other materials.

Monitoring and Communicating About Student Progress

Monitoring student progress on assigned tasks to increase student content knowledge and skills requires communication among school and afterschool staff, students, and families. Monitoring student progress is essential for measuring the academic growth of students and for student learning. Not only should afterschool staff monitor student progress, they should also be actively involved in helping students learn to evaluate their own progress. Student self assessment is critical to the learning process (National Research Council, 2001, 2005). "Ultimately, students need to develop metacognitive abilities—the habits of mind necessary to assess their own progress—rather than relying solely on external indicators" (2005, p. 17). Afterschool staff can encourage students to assess their own progress through questioning and coaching during homework time.

Staff should develop multiple ways to monitor student progress and to communicate with day staff, students, and parents about student progress in afterschool. The success of homework time is impacted by communication (Jayanthi, Nelson, & Sawyer, 1995). Sanacore (1999) suggests that school and afterschool professionals "talk at least once a week … to elaborate on what the children can do and to determine if the homework is responsive to the children's learning needs" (p. 15). The following section examines the nature of monitoring and communicating about homework time, goals, suggested strategies for afterschool staff, and why it is an effective homework practice.

Communication

Afterschool staff should strive to communicate honestly and frequently with students and academic partners. Research reveals that high quality afterschool staff communicate with stakeholders openly and regularly (Seppanen, 1993; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; Intercultural Center for Research in Education & National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2005). Information, such as homework expectations, academic progress, and inquiries about homework, should be shared on a consistent basis. Additionally, communicating about homework should be an interchange among the afterschool staff and students, parents, day staff, volunteers, and tutors (Epstein, 1995).

When seeking to develop relationships with students and other academic partners, it is important to avoid barriers in communication. Jayanthi, Nelson, & Sawyer (1995) identified six major homework-communication problems:

- failure to initiate communication between parents and teachers;
- failure to communicate early enough when a students experiences difficulty;
- failure to communicate consistently or often enough;
- failure to follow-through with agreed-upon channels of communication; and
- failure to use clear modes of communication and to send clear messages.

Written communication is the most traditional method of sharing information about homework progress. A daily assignment book is a highly rated strategy for improving communication (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1997). A daily assignment book contains a place for each

assignment to be written. In addition, some books have a place for the teacher's name, subject, and completion check box. These books are maintained by students and may vary depending on the policies of the school.

Monitoring

When afterschool providers monitor student progress, they are actively involved in assessing the content areas in which students need assistance, supervising homework quality and completion, keeping records of student progress, encouraging students to do their best, and helping students learn to assess their own progress. Checklists and rubrics are assessment tools that can facilitate discussions about student work. Sanacore (1999) describes a session in which classroom and homework clinic teachers used a writing rubric. They found that, "the student developed her topic imaginatively, organized her ideas logically, and developed her ideas fully though examples and explanations; however, she demonstrated minimal sentence variety, used incorrect language occasionally, and made errors in mechanics that, at times, hindered the clarity of the writing." (p 15-16) At the end of the session the professionals developed insights into how to help the child and developed a homework plan to develop her writing mechanics. Checklists and rubrics should be shared with students so that they develop skills in evaluating their own work. Student self-assessment is critical to the learning process (National Research Council, 2001, 2005). "A number of studies show that achievement improves when students are encouraged to assess their own contributions and work" (p.17). Afterschool staff can help students learn to self assess their own work by using checklists and rubrics with them during homework time.

Two other ideas that help students keep track of academic homework assignments are homework planners and homework hotlines (Glazer & Williams, 2001; Reach & Cooper, 2004). In the homework planners, students record their assignments and sometimes teachers write notes or special instructions for individual students, afterschool instructors, or tutors. Afterschool instructors and tutors help students to complete the assignments. Not all schools use homework planners, some use homework hotline phone systems. Day-school teachers call-in assignments along with special notices of upcoming events, tests, and projects; and students, parents, afterschool providers, and tutors call to listen to these messages.

Tutoring, Mentoring, and Building Study Skills

Ideally, prior to coming to the afterschool program, assignments should have been explained by the students' teachers, and students should arrive ready to complete their assignments. However, this may not hold true for all students and some may require additional help. Students who do not have to the knowledge and skills to complete their assignments may need someone to explain the assignments to them and to show them effective methods and skills for analyzing and completing their assignments. Afterschool staff and tutors can assist with these tasks. The role of the afterschool staff during homework time is to provide homework assistance or tutoring while motivating students to learn and to help them develop and build study skills.

Tutors-in general-provide students with specialized help in a specific content area. A tutor should have knowledge and training in the content area as well as strategies that have been proven effective in helping students understand their assignments. While there are a variety of tutoring methods, the ones commonly used in afterschool are: adult-to-student, peer-to-peer, and cross-age tutoring. Peer tutoring is an approach where students of similar ages instruct one another. In cross-age tutoring, students in higher-grade levels work with younger students (Thomas, 1993). Peer and cross-age tutoring often provides academic benefits to students in a homework environment. Damon & Phelps (1989) cite that success in student tutoring is greatly attributed to students speaking the same language and being able to communicate with one another in a different, yet meaningful way than students can communicate with other adults.

In a homework help program, focus should be given to building the capacity of the homework staff to mentor students. Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship between a caring adult and a student who needs support to achieve academic and social goals. It is based on encouragement, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share (McPartland & Nettles, 1991). Afterschool staff serve as mentors to students during homework time by providing guidance, answering questions, pointing out strengths and areas for development, and transferring knowledge in areas such as communication, critical thinking, responsibility, flexibility, and teamwork. Within the framework of an afterschool program, staff can develop a mentoring relationship with students by modeling appropriate behavior for the students, motivating them to learn, and helping them build study skills. By translating mentoring into specified actions that help students to complete their work, afterschool staff can have a profound academic impact on their students. Research indicates that positive relationships between staff and students lead to improved student achievement and long-term academic success, particularly with a disadvantaged young person (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). During challenging homework times, the personal attention and encouragement from staff can motivate students to develop or practice new skills.

Afterschool staff have an active role during homework time in an afterschool program. Cooper (2003) emphasizes the needs for afterschool staff to motivate, mentor, model, and monitor their students during homework time to support academic achievement. Student motivation "refers to a student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process" (Bomia, Beluzo, Demeester, Elander, Johnson, & Sheldon, 1997). Staff who

create warm and accepting atmospheres during homework time will promote persistent effort and favorable attitudes toward learning. Lowman (1990) identifies the following actions that staff should perform to increase student motivation:

- create an atmosphere that is open and positive;
- help students feel that they are valued members of a learning community; and
- give frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they should do well.
- When interacting with students, it is particularly important to highlight strengths. Praise is crucial in the development of student's self-esteem. Table 3 provides examples of effective and ineffective student praise.

Afterschool staff can influence the behavior of children by demonstrating desired behavior. Bandura (1962) developed a social learning theory that recognized that students acquire good and bad behaviors by modeling behaviors witnessed in their environment. Learning by observation takes place via four processes: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Decker & Nathan, 1985). In the afterschool environment, students learn from what they see and hear adults doing. Staff should always model appropriate behavior while in the afterschool program. Homework time is an optimal time for staff to demonstrate positive behaviors towards learning. This can be accomplished by being encouraging about learning and being positive about homework assignments. Afterschool staff should be in the homework area to monitor student progress. Staff should make it a practice to circulate among students to provide assistance and encouragement. Successful monitoring includes constantly moving around the space to manage

behavior and task completion, being aware of how well or poorly students are progressing with their assignments, and working with individual students who need individual help or assigning their help to staff or students who are capable of helping.

Rice (1997) suggests specific ways to help students during homework clinics or centers work independently (1) concentrate on how to read directions by breaking multi-step directions down into components, (2) think about the process of how answers or solutions are derived as well as the product—the finished homework, and (3) demonstrate how to solve problems, but avoid doing homework for students.

Supplemental Skills

When working with students on homework, it is important that they have the relevant skills needed to complete their homework. If it is evident that some students are consistently unable to complete their assignments and have not acquired the necessary study skills, afterschool staff may choose to offer a skill development component in their program. This component can be incorporated as a specialized skill development time, as needed with individual students, or as enrichment when homework is completed. It is important to note that the skill development portion can be beneficial to all students, not only those who are in need of extra assistance.

Supplemental skills are critical to homework completion. Eilam (2001) found that academic achievement improved after students were given a curriculum unit in technical/management procedures and low order cognitive skills that targeted homework strategies. The students in the study worked on skills such as keeping up with their recorded homework assignments, timing

their deadlines, selecting work sequences to maximize their energy and time, identifying question formats, and differentiating between surface and deeper level reading. If students do not know how to organize their time, take notes, and prepare for tests, it is difficult for them to complete homework.

Time and self-management

In the area of time management, staff can help students to development techniques that enable them to be more efficient, to learn problem-solving strategies, and to learn concepts through various methods such as creating graphic organizers. Staff can also help students determine how to use a calendar to schedule assignments; to plan for tests and to divide large tasks into smaller, manageable tasks and assign personal due dates to them. Sometimes students may have an unrealistic expectation of how much (or how little) focus is needed for a test. Help them to divide the material into small chunks of information and to determine when they need to start study or complete assignments and learning time and self-management is important. Students may have a hard time concentrating and getting motivated. Homework providers can provide instruction on good posture and deep breathing to help students to calm down and focus on the task at hand (Luckie, Smethurst, & Huntley, 2000). Helping them to visualize themselves completing the assignment and feeling the relief associated with it being completed

Note taking

In an effort to support supplemental skills, during homework time students can establish or enhance note taking skills. Students need to learn how to take notes from a lecture as well as

notes from a textbook. When taking notes from a textbook, students need to employ three techniques: skimming, active reading, and summarizing (Luckie, et al., 2000). When skimming, students should pay attention to anything in the chapter that shows emphasis. Students should jot down all titles, subtitles, and boldfaced words. They should make notes of the titles of all the pictures and charts. Reviewing this quick list will help students know what the reading is generically about and help them to pay attention to the important items when they actively read the content. After skimming the chapter, students should go back and read the chapter looking for the main points of the title and subtitles. They should jot those down in a way that works best for them, either in outline or pictorial (flow chart) form. They should write down what the pictures and charts mean, and any additional information they learned from the chapter. When the student summarizes the chapter, they should write down about a half page of items they remember. Also if questions are not provided at the end of the chapter, they should think of some questions that may be asked on a quiz or test and write them down.

A similar method for taking notes is the PQRST Method (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, and Bem, 1993). It consists of the five phases:

P(review) - skim read the whole chapter

Q(uestion) - turn headings into questions

R(ead) - answer above questions

S(elf recitation) - recall and recite main ideas in your own words

T(est) - test, relate ideas to each other and review chapter

Test preparation

Homework time is also a useful time for learning test preparation skills. When helping students prepare for tests, staff should help them think about not only the content of the test but the organization and context of the test. Here is a list of questions to ask the student so they can begin to think about their test:

- What will the test cover?
- What is the format of the test?
- What kind of questions will be on the test?
- How did you find out the answer to these questions?
- A previous test?
- The teacher?
- A classmate?
- How many types of questions will be on the test?
- Multiple choice
- True/False
- Matching
- Short answer
- Essay
- Diagram --(Luckie et al., 2000)

Summary

Homework assistance is one of many components in an afterschool program and the practices outlined in this review, while not wholly explained in the context of afterschool programs, are critical to the success of supporting school day assignments and have well established benefits. Given the amount of local, state, and federal resources being provided for afterschool—the interest in creating programs that are supporting student academic achievement for low-achieving students has increased. Afterschool programs have the capacity to assist students when there is lack of parental support, knowledge or time.

Afterschool activities must allow students to expand their learning opportunities through exposure, practice, and mentorship. These homework practices provide students to complete assigned tasks in the proper environment, with the proper resources and support. As research continues in the field of academic enrichment and support in afterschool, it is necessary to continue to consider the nature of the afterschool context. The quality of program implementation and staff knowledge and expertise are also critical to the execution of high quality programming and homework support.

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