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AN ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL HOMEWORK GUIDELINES IN ONE URBAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

JAMES E. LARSEN

B.S. University of Central Florida, 1992
M. Ed. Nova Southeastern University, 2001

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership
in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
in the College of Education and Human Performance
at the University of Central Florida
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Major Professor: Rosemarye Taylor

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate homework guidelines according to criteria identified in the literature. Further the researcher attempted to determine the relationship, if any, between homework guidelines and student achievement results as measured by 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics for high schools in one urban school district.

A document analysis was conducted focusing on curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks and school websites. Any reference to the identified criteria was recorded in the Homework Criteria Matrix. The next step was to interview the 19 high school principals based on the same criteria. These results were also included in the rubric. An analysis of the data was conducted on the overall presence of elements found for each of the 19 high schools. The elements were quantified and a Pearson r correlation was run to determine the relationship between the presence of homework elements and student achievement results that were being looked at.

Data showed that there were few guidelines that were made available to parents and students. The majority of the written homework guidelines were located in the faculty handbook. The other major source of information on homework was the principal interview. Of the sources reviewed, 86% of the homework guidelines that were articulated were found in the faculty handbook and conversations disseminated to the faculty through faculty meetings and Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings.

There were no significant relationships found between homework guidelines and student achievement results as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE	1
Introduction	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	3
Definition of Terms	4
Conceptual Framework	4
Research Questions	8
Limitations	8
Delimitations	9
Assumptions	9
Organization of the Study	9
Methodology	10
Analysis	10
Variables.....	11
Procedures	12
Population and Sample.....	14
Instrumentation.....	14
Summary	14
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	16
Introduction	16
Structure	21
Time Parameters and Constraints.....	34
Responsibilities	39
Outcomes.....	47
Summary	50
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	51
Introduction	51
Population and Sample.....	52
Instrumentation.....	52
Data Collection.....	53
Data Analysis	55
Research Question 1	55
Research Question 2.....	56
Research Question 3.....	57
Research Question 4.....	57
Summary	58
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF DATA	59

Introduction	59
Source Documents.....	59
Curriculum Guide.....	60
Faculty Handbook	60
Parent Handbook	61
Student Handbook	61
School Website.....	62
Research Question 1	62
Structure	70
Constraints and Parameters	71
Responsibility.....	71
Feedback.....	72
Research Question 2.....	72
Research Question 3.....	79
Research Question 4.....	79
Summary	88
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	90
Introduction	90
Summary of the Study.....	90
Discussion of the Findings	94
Implications for Practice	104
Implication 1	106
Implication 2	108
Implication 3	109
Implication 4	110
Implication 5	111
Implication 6	112
Recommendations for Further Research.....	112
Conclusions	115
APPENDIX A UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL OF RESEARCH	116
APPENDIX B LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL OF RESEARCH	118
APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	120
APPENDIX D HOMEWORK GUIDELINE CRITERIA MATRIX.....	123
APPENDIX E COMPLETED HOMEWORK GUIDELINE CRITERIA MATRIX.....	128
REFERENCES	131

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 <i>Research Questions and Data Sources</i>	12
Table 2 <i>Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix Scoring</i>	54
Table 3 <i>Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix Coding</i>	55
Table 4 <i>Frequency of High Schools Utilizing Potential Available Sources</i>	63
Table 5 <i>Location of Guideline Citations</i>	64
Table 6 <i>Total Points Acquired (12 Points Possible)</i>	66
Table 7 <i>Homework Criteria Points by High School</i>	68
Table 8 <i>Frequency of Schools Citing Structure and/or Parameters and Constraints</i>	70
Table 9 <i>Frequency of Schools Citing Responsibilities and/or Outcomes</i>	71
Table 10 <i>Individuals or Groups Involved in Establishing Homework Guidelines</i>	74
Table 11 <i>Methods Utilized to Establish Homework Guidelines</i>	77
Table 12 <i>High School Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix score and Student Achievement Scores (2014-2015)</i>	80
Table 13 <i>Mean Student Achievement Scores for High Schools 3, 13, 17, and 19</i>	82
Table 14 <i>Mean Student Achievement Scores for High Schools 2, 4, 11, and 16</i>	82
Table 15 <i>Minimum, Maximum, Mean, and Standard Deviation Descriptive Statistics</i>	84
Table 16 <i>Correlation Between Homework Guideline Matrix Scores and Student Achievement Metrics</i>	85
Table 17 <i>Correlation Between Homework Guideline Structure and Student Achievement Metrics</i>	86
Table 18 <i>Correlation Between Homework Guideline Parameters and Constraints and Student Achievement Metrics</i>	86
Table 19 <i>Correlation Between Homework Guideline Responsibilities and Student Achievement Metrics</i>	87
Table 20 <i>Correlation Between Homework Guideline Outcomes and Student Achievement Metrics</i>	87
Table 21 <i>Correlations for Student Achievement Metrics by Construct</i>	88

CHAPTER 1 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Introduction

The utilization of homework as an instructional strategy continues to drive debate. Research to date focused on time spent completing assignments and how much homework that teachers assigned (Murphy & Decker, 2001). Homework policy or written homework guideline research was limited and student achievement results varied (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). Kralovec (2007) reported that the available research did not illustrate any more clarity on student achievement impact than was known 100 years ago.

Hattie (2009) listed the effect size of homework as .29. “An effect size provides a common expression of the magnitude of study outcomes for many types of outcome variables, such as school achievement” (Hattie, 2009, p. 7). An effect size of .29 falls in the low effect size range and reinforced the need for additional research on homework guidelines, practice, and the impact of homework.

Cooper (2003) detailed an analysis separating elementary, middle and high school achievement results that demonstrated that the .29 effect size could be misleading depending on the building level. When comparing students who were assigned homework regularly versus a comparable student not receiving homework, Cooper (2003) related that there was no difference in student achievement results in elementary school students; however, the high school results indicated that the student receiving homework outperformed the comparable student by 69%. This result was consistent with previous research performed by Cooper and Valentine (2001) indicating a .64 effect size

for students who completed homework assignments compared with students who did not.

A survey of homework policy across the United States (Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein, & Bursuck, 1994) rendered data indicating that only 35.2% of the 267 respondents had a formal school district policy. This finding signified that the majority of homework guidelines were set either by an individual school or the individual teacher. Of the 94 school districts that reported homework guidelines, 70% addressed the types of homework to be given and 48% required feedback to be provided to students (Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein, & Bursuck, 1994). Similarly, Murphy and Decker's (2001) research on homework guidelines in Illinois high schools mirrored the nationwide results reporting only 31% of the 92 high schools had developed a formal homework policy. Again in 2001, a study in North Carolina reported about 39% of the school districts to have a system-wide policy statement as well (Hill, Spencer, Alston & Fitzgerald, 2001). The lack of homework guidelines that provided consistency of expectations in what an effective assignment looked like, the time requirements, and how it is used demonstrated the need for formal homework policy (Christen & Gomez, 1987).

Problem Statement

The problem to be studied is the lack of research conducted on high school homework guidelines as they align to best practices. Two ways to increase the learning opportunities for students are to lengthen the school day and provide greater amounts of content (Murphy & Decker, 2001). Homework has traditionally been the means to accomplish those two goals. The problem to be studied relates to the common

instructional practice of homework as independent practice which is often accepted without benefit of analysis of resulting student learning outcomes. The effect size of homework is .29 (Hattie, 2009) and as high as .64 when isolated to high school students (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). The related challenge for a high school principal is how homework policy and practice relates to increased student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate homework guidelines according to criteria identified in the literature. Further the researcher determined the relationship, if any, between homework guidelines and student achievement results as measured by the 2014-2015 school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics for high schools in one urban school district.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to relate homework guidelines in high schools in one urban school district and student achievement outcomes. The findings and recommendations of this study may assist school districts and individual high school principals in preparing, implementing, and monitoring homework guidelines that are consistent with higher levels of student achievement.

Definition of Terms

American College Test: (ACT) is a standards based exam with a college-ready score of 19 for both mathematics and reading (ACT Test website, 2015).

Graduation Rate: The percentage of students receiving a standard diploma on the Federal Graduation Rate as set forth by the Department of Education (Florida Department of Education, 2014).

High School: Traditional 9-12 high school settings, not including private or charter institutions.

Homework: “Tasks assigned to students by school teacher that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 1989, p. 7).

Homework Policy: Written guidelines (handbooks, documents, or websites) designed to provide students, teachers, and parents the parameters for assigning and monitoring homework (Christen & Gomez, 1987).

Scholastic Assessment Test: (SAT) is a college entrance exam developed by College Board with college-ready scores defined as 440 for both mathematics and reading (SAT test website, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

Contingency theory was the basis for the conceptual framework. Owens and Valesky (2007) defined contingency theory to be a compromise between universal principle and the uniqueness that exists within organizations. Differences in a school’s policy that may exist when compared with other comparable schools would be contingent

upon the school context variables such as if school homework guidelines exists, the number of days homework is required, the recommended number of daily hours homework should take, the types of homework assigned, the feedback that is provided to the students, and monitoring that is occurring. When designing guidelines or policy it is important to consider the nature of the organization (Owens & Valesky, 2007). The number of exceptional education students, English language learners, free and reduced lunch students, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate students, and mobility rates should to be taken into consideration when developing homework guidelines on the school level.

Homework can provide higher levels of content retention, self-discipline, study skills, time management and parental involvement when assigned with a defined purpose (Protheroe, 2009). Activities that related to learning, such as homework, can bring about improved student achievement (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999). A well-defined homework policy that includes a statement of philosophy, suggested time frames, and clear responsibilities for students, parents, and teachers can have a positive effect of student achievement outcomes (Connecticut State Department of Education, 1984). Cooper (2011) stated that a school district homework policy should clearly address the purpose of homework and detail the expectations of teachers, students, and parents as well as the need for these stakeholders to work cohesively. Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein (1985), in their analysis of 15 empirical studies also cited the importance of teachers, students and parents working together for any homework policy to benefit student achievement outcomes. Cooper (2011) stated that the statement of philosophy

should include what value the school district holds on homework, the purpose of each assignment, and the delineated steps students must take to be successful on their homework assignments. Research cited previously indicated that homework is much more beneficial to students on the secondary level and this data should not be ignored when designing homework policy with regard to frequency, length, and capabilities of students on various grade levels (Cooper, 2011).

The types of homework assignments vary as well. Thomas (1992) outlined four categories of homework assignments to be practice assignments, preparation assignments, extension assignments, and creative assignments. Practice assignments should be given after a skill is acquired to strengthen the skill, preparation assignments are designed as an anticipatory set or background gathering drill, extension assignments are used to apply their knowledge to a deeper level through project based learning and creative assignments are used to integrate a number of skills into one deliverable (Thomas, 1992). Murphy and Decker (2001) reported that the most common purpose of homework is to review content already addressed in class and that textbook questions were the most widely used means of doing so. An additional 25% of the population Murphy and Decker (2001) analyzed reported using worksheets as the predominate form of homework. In the Connecticut State Department of Education report in 1984, the main purpose of homework should mirror the practice assignments as defined by Thomas (1992) to be reinforcers of the lessons already taught in class, but to also develop solid study habits.

Establishing time constraints should also be noted in homework policy (Christen & Gomez, 1987). These time lines should be flexible depending on the cognitive level of a student as well as the grade level (Cooper, 2011). Time constraints included the frequency of homework given on a weekly basis as well as the number of hours a night a student should spend on homework assignments.

For homework policy to best produce positive results, feedback should be given in a timely manner (Hill, et al., 2001). The 52.2% of school districts that did not include feedback in their homework policies coupled with the 64.8% of school districts that did not have any written policy at all indicated that the lack of providing timely feedback may be of importance when looking at the data. Thomas (1992) clearly listed one of the major roles of the teacher to be providing prompt feedback for all homework assignments.

The responsibilities for homework should be shared among administrators, teachers, parents, and students (Thomas, 1992). Christen and Gomez (1987) suggested that school districts invite parents, teachers and administrators to planning committees to set the guidelines within homework policy. Students are most often left off the planning committees and school districts do not typically tap into all interest groups when writing homework policy (Hill, et al., 2001). The need for collaboration of the stakeholders was reinforced by the research conducted by Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein (1985). Christen and Gomez (1987) which extended the idea of involving students to include their input on individual homework assignments and the appropriate time frames needed to accomplish the tasks.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?
2. What is the process for establishing the school district homework guidelines and the homework guidelines for each high school in one urban school district?
3. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework guidelines and the school district homework guidelines?
4. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework guidelines for individual high schools and student achievement as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

Limitations

There were limitations to this study. The perceived implementation of homework policy, as shared by the high school principal, compared with actual implementation varied greatly. The number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses also differed from school to school. Although the researcher is not in a supervisory role with regard to the 19 high school principals, it should be noted that the researcher's leadership role on a district level could still have had an impact on the interview responses.

Delimitations

The delimitations that exist in this study center on the researcher's relationship with the participants as well as the fact that the study only looked at one school district.

Assumptions

This study assumes that the urban school district, as well as the 19 high schools, had a defined homework policy in existence and is monitored for fidelity. It was also assumed that the requirements of homework policy may differ, however that the components that outline homework policy were somewhat consistent. The study also assumed that the school leader was aware of the homework policy regardless of how long the principal had been in place. The researcher remained objective while in a familiar context during data gathering and analysis.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter provided an introduction, the problem and purpose statements, terms, limitations, variables, the framework, and methodology of the study. The literature review was found in chapter two. Chapter three detailed the methodology of the study followed by the results in chapter four. Chapter five summarized the results and discussions of further implications as well as provided suggestions for future study about homework policy and its possible relationship with student achievement results.

Methodology

The methodology utilized in this study was a qualitative a quantitative study in nature. To the extent available school district homework policy and the individual school homework guidelines were collected. Each document, the curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbook, and websites, was analyzed according to the criteria identified in the conceptual framework that is recommended to be in homework policy: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback. Further qualitative data was also gathered from the 19 high school principal interviews (See Appendix C). The questions used were field tested by former principals to determine if the question would render the information it was designed for. This allowed for the questions to be refined prior to the formal interviews if necessary. Research question 4 called for a Pearson r correlation to be calculated to determine the relationship, if any, existed between the number of homework guidelines and student achievement results.

Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through coding for common themes. Each interview was read first to gather intitial commonalities and then reread to code. Through a document analysis the researcher used the data from the policies and the qualitative data from the interviews to illustrate any relationships that may exist.

“Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents”

(Bowen, 2009, p. 28). The data gathered from these two sources were analyzed using the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. (See Appendix D).

The data were gathered through the reading and interpreting of the written policies or guidelines, as well as interview transcriptions to complete the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. Codes and themes, defined by the matrix, produced a synthesis of data rendered from multiple methods of collection (Bowen, 2009). The use of the matrix increases the validity of the data (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The matrix consisted of four constructs with numeric values. Twelve was the maximum score a school could earn and zero was the minimum. Calculations were made according to these values: structure worth four points (two points for each category), parameters and constraints worth three points (one point for each category), responsibility worth three points (one point for each category), and outcomes worth two points (one point for each category). Pearson r correlations were then calculated to determine the relationship between the matrix scores and the student achievement metrics and the four construct scores and the student achievement metrics.

Variables

For this study the independent variables consisted of four constructs: structure, parameters and constraints, responsibilities, and outcomes. The construct of structure included policy guidelines and philosophy/beliefs. Parameters and constraints included frequency, durations, and length. Responsibilities included the role of students, teachers,

and administrators. Outcomes included students' capabilities and feedback from the teacher.

The dependent variables were defined by the following metrics: 2014-2015 school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics for high schools in a large urban school district. Extraneous variables that may be encountered in this study consist of the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

Table 1
Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Question	Data Source
1. To what extent do the homework policies align with the recommendations in the literature?	School district website School websites
2. What is the process for establishing homework policies in each high school in one urban school district?	Principal interviews
3. To what extent, if any, is a relationship between school homework policies and the school district homework policy?	Homework criteria matrix
4. To what extent, if any, is a relationship between homework policy in individual high schools and student achievement outputs as measured by school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics?	Office of Research and Accountability The Florida Department of Education

Procedures

The first step in the research study was to gather the existing homework policies for the school district and the 19 high schools through the curriculum guides, faculty

handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks, websites, and interview responses. Each of the policies were evaluated based on the criteria of including: philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback identified in the conceptual framework (Connecticut State Department of Education, 1984, Cooper, 2011, Hill, et. al., 2001, Christen & Gomez, 1987, & Thomas, 1992). The presence or absence of each construct was entered into the matrix for scoring. No attempt was made to evaluate the quality of the criteria included nor the implementation of the criteria, but only for the presence of each.

The second step was to interview the 19 high school principals in one urban school district to discover additional evidence related to the extent the evaluation criteria were included and their recommendations for improvements in homework policy development and implementation were sought. Interview items are found in Appendix C.

Analysis of the interview transcriptions were coded for common practices, perceptions, and themes. The Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix was completed using interviews, documents, and website analysis to measure the alignment of school district and school guidelines with recommended criteria

Student achievement metrics as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics were gathered. The comparison of the evaluation criteria scores and the student achievement measurements was recorded for each high school. Pearson r correlations were then

calculated in relation to the student achievement metrics and the overall matrix score as well as the four construct scores. Summary case study information for selected high schools was then provided.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of the 19 high school in one urban school district in Central Florida.

Instrumentation

There are two instruments utilized by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The first was an interview tool, found in Appendix C. Each of the interview questions correlated to one of the constructs identified through the literature review as those guidelines that led to effective homework policies and/or practices. The second instrument was the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix, found in Appendix D. The Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix served to score the guidelines that were evident and in which source document the homework guideline was referenced

Summary

The goal of the research was to evaluate existing homework guidelines in one urban school district and the process as to how guidelines were developed and created by the school district and the individual schools. In addition, the researcher attempted to determine if there was any statistically significant relationship between the parameters that existed in the homework guidelines at 19 high schools and the school district with

regard to student achievement metrics as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The benefits of individual instructional practices have been studied for years and through a multitude of formats. Hattie (2009), through his meta-analysis, assigned an effect size to many of the predominant practices. Homework, as an instructional practice had brought about debate for numerous years and had been argued vigorously from both sides. Hattie (2009) assigned an effect size for homework of .29, a relatively low effect size, for the overall instructional practice of homework. Arguments had persisted from both sides about the negatives and positives of homework but if any consensus was to be reached it would be that students in secondary, predominately high school, benefited far greater than students in elementary school (American Teacher, 2009). Cooper (2003) compared students who were assigned homework in class versus comparable students who were not assigned homework in the same courses. His results supported the claim by the American Teacher (2009) as there were no significant differences in student achievement results in the elementary school students and as much as a 69% increase in achievement for high school students who received homework versus those that did not (Cooper, 2003). Previous research conducted by Cooper and Valentine (2001) found that there was a .64 effect size for high school students who completed homework assignments versus those student who did not. Homework was defined as “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours”

(Cooper, 1989, p. 7). Fairbanks, Clark and Barry (2005) further delineated the tasks referred to by Cooper (1989) as both written and non-written assignments.

Research in forming policy or written guidelines had been nominal (Cooper & Valentine, 2001) and the research that had been performed had only illustrated the vast divide between proponents and opponents of the benefit of homework practices. Trautwein and Ulrich (2003) reported the same findings and further stated that a preponderance of research was found in doctoral theses that had yet to be published. There were some themes that resonated throughout research though, for instance, the underlying purpose of homework as an instructional strategy. Murphy and Decker (2001) stated that there are two ways that predominately extended a students' opportunity to larger amounts of content acquisition; namely by lengthening the school day and by provided a greater amount of exposure to various content. Trautwein and Ulrich (2003) described homework as a multifaceted strategy that relied on students, teachers and parents serving a number of roles to perform a variety of differentiated tasks that impact not only lessons but student achievement. The impact on student achievement gains still remained vague due in part to the variety of variables that surrounded their description of homework (Trautwein & Ulrich, 2003). This then reinforced the claim by Murphy and Decker (2001) that researchers had only reached superficial levels of depth when attempting to quantify the use of homework as an instructional strategy. The holes that existed in research focused on the lack of understanding on how homework was assigned, what the purpose of the homework assignment was, and how feedback was provided to students once the assignment had been completed (Murphy & Decker, 2001). The vast

amount of research that had been quantified merely related to the amount of homework that was assigned to students and the amount of time students claimed to spend on completing those assignments (Murphy & Decker, 2001).

Research on homework revealed difficulties that had surrounded overall educational research for years. Defining the inherent benefits of homework was complex as teachers had the ability to assign and model their assignments in a variety of methods, students on all academic levels chose if they desired to complete those assignments, and the variables that surrounded the capability of a student to complete an assignment at home, regardless of if that reason was ability based or resource based, all created difficulty when trying to isolate the direct benefits of homework practices (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). Christen and Gomez (1987) supported this research through their analysis of homework studies to find that the majority of research pertained to the quantifiable data of amount of homework or the perceptions of various populations about their beliefs on if homework should be assigned or not.

What research did exist about the costs and benefits of homework that had been published had remained inconsistent with one another (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). Educators who argued the benefits of homework included the ability to reinforce content objectives and that students who completed their assignments outside of school on a consistent basis had a higher probability of academic success (Simplicio, 2005). Hong, Milgram, and Rowell (2004) reported that based on the quality of the planning and distribution of homework assignments the possibility of homework supporting the advancement in student skills did exist, however the reverse was just as probable.

Among other benefits stated for homework as an instructional strategy was that retention levels were higher as well as the overall understanding of the content it covered (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). Cooper and Valentine (2001) also referred to inherent benefits of homework as well to include an increase in student study habits, student attitudes about school, developing more independent learners and the illustration that learning can take place anywhere. Kohn (2006) claimed that when researchers reported positive aspects of homework practices that it would mean there were positive results with the grades students received on the teacher designed tests as well as the final grades students received in those classes and any increase in scoring on standardized tests. These metrics were the easiest to collect but not necessarily the metrics that best reported if any benefits were actually realized from the administering of homework (Kohn, 2006). Heitzmann (1998) supported the research of Kohn (2006) by focusing not on overall homework itself, but on targeted homework that would require the instructor to plan the assignments deliberately and with defined purposes.

The opponents of homework stated that with very young students there was no correlation with homework and student performance and what little positive impact there was for high school students could be explained away when factoring in other variables such as their home and community responsibilities (Kohn, 2007). Other arguments centered on the lack of purpose and meaning attached to homework assignments (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). Lack of feedback or inappropriate feedback had been a root in the opposition's argument. Students did not find meaning in homework assignments that they received no immediate feedback or even in feedback provided in a timely manner as

it was then viewed as a waste of time (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). Kohn (2006) stated that there was very little research that could be found to determine if homework had a direct relationship with the depth of knowledge and understanding a student acquired from these types of assignments, rather proponents relied on assumptions that students who were assigned and completed more homework assignments had higher standardized achievement results. Homework assignments many times were expected to be completed by students to reinforce content or standards regardless of if the content or standard had been thoroughly taught in the classroom, almost as an afterthought or a predetermined event that was going to occur no matter how far the students had progressed in the lesson (Craft, 2008). Further, Wilson and Rhodes (2010) supported this by stating that most students that do not complete homework assignments was because of their lack of knowledge of how to do the work, while still other students reported that they did not receive adequate directions in order to complete the homework in the first place. Other negative effects of homework as reported by Cooper and Valentine (2001) were a decrease in opportunities students could participate in after school hours, a higher level of students who cheated to improve their grades, and an increase in the gap between high- and low-socioeconomic students. Frustration had been added to the list of negatives because of the number of students who simply could not perform the required tasks at home without proper assistance (Kohn, 2007). Many parents who disagreed with homework practices had reported that teachers expected far too much time to be spent on homework during out of school hours and that these assignments often times lacked

purpose as they were repetitive and did not support the deeper understanding of content (Simplicio, 2005).

Arguments for or against homework had existed for over a century and tended to shift every 10 to 15 years. Regardless of the arguments homework continued to be assigned by instructors with high frequency and in all grade levels (Danielson, Strom & Kramer, 2011). Parents, especially of high-socioeconomic families, expected that their children were provided the best education and challenged as much as possible; the assigning of homework to these families had been a mark of a high performing teacher and school (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). The preponderance of parents however, were looking to school districts to reevaluate current homework policy and guidelines or to begin implementing appropriate homework policy and guidelines for schools that required mandatory homework (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). These parents had begun to question the validity of homework assignments that had already been preplanned prior to a lesson even being presented because the expectation was that all teachers assigned some form of homework (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). Wilson and Rhodes (2010) went on to illustrate that those parents would rather homework assignments be required of students based on their ability level rather than a quota that was desired by a school's administration.

Structure

The lack of school or school district homework guidelines had led to the questions of what a viable homework assignment looked like, how often homework assignments

should be given, and in large part to how those homework assignments should be reflected in a students' grade (Christen & Gomez, 1987). Homework policy and guidelines had come into question not only in the United States but around the world as well. For example, in Australia parents lobbied for a nationwide homework policy that would set limitations on the amount of time a student should be required to complete homework tasks and in Sweden the families called for the outright elimination of homework all together (Kralovec, 2007). Suggestions to appropriate homework practices had continued to be shared by parents and students. In Wisconsin, the Elmbrook School District began to regulate what types of homework was assigned by teachers (Danielson, Strom & Kramer, 2011). The three types of homework the school district defined were practice, preparation and integration assignments. Practice assignments included those that focus on review topics, the reinforcement of previously learned skills and anything the teacher deemed to be on an independent level requiring no additional support; preparation assignments were those activities that would prepare a student for an upcoming lesson (an anticipatory set for example); integration assignments were those that required students to use higher order thinking skills when applying known skills to extension tasks (Danielson, Strom & Kramer, 2011). Thomas (1992) suggested that these same assignments be used but extended the lesson types to include creative assignments which would be assignments designed to use a variety of skills to perform a project-oriented task.

Christen and Gomez (1987) suggested that schools and school districts begin asking a number of questions when determining the work of homework. These questions

served to answer what the purpose of the assignment was, what the link was to the current content, the level and quality of feedback was provided to students, and what was the value assigned to the completion of the homework (Christen & Gomez, 1987). Homework assignments should be targeted to the specific needs of the students based on their learning styles and their current abilities (Heitzmann, 1998). Assignments should be designed with a variety of lengths and difficulty levels depending on the student population in a class, a detailed explanation, in writing when possible, of how to accomplish accurate completion, and a way of properly assessing the students work and ability as demonstrated through the assignment (Heitzmann, 1998). The requirements of effective homework guidelines had matriculated from the simple desire to increase the amount of time students can spend in content acquisition and the development of positive study habits and routines (Murphy & Decker, 2001) to a more comprehensive desire to establish written policies that reinforced consistency, set reasonable time constraints both on the amount of time required as well as length of the assignment, to support the professional growth of teachers with regard to the development of appropriate assignments, and to the communication that was required for positive results (Craft, 2008).

Homework guidelines that were supported by school districts and schools needed to be purposeful in nature, given definite constraints, engaged all levels of stakeholders, and provided an adequate expectation of feedback (Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein & Bursuck, 1994). As the need for consistent homework guidelines became more apparent it was important to note how often a school's homework policy aligned to

the overall school district's homework policy. Murphy and Decker (2001) examined the alignment and found that it was difficult to align policies that did not exist in writing. In their study of 92 Illinois school districts, only 31% of the school districts represented by 92 high schools had a written homework policy with defined guidelines (Murphy & Decker, 2001). This result was consistent with the findings of Cumblad, Epstein, and Bursuck (1994), when surveying homework policy across the United States, found that only 35.2% of the 267 respondents had a homework policy on record. Murphy and Decker (2001) took their study one step further to report that of the 92 individual high schools only 24% had written homework policy or guidelines. The national survey conducted by Cumblad, Epstein, and Bursuck (1994) indicated that since such a small percentage of school districts had a formal written homework policy that most homework guidelines were being determined by the local schools or perhaps even by the individual teachers themselves. Numbers in North Carolina were to be found consistent with the previous research reporting that only 39% of the school districts had a system-wide homework policy and only 20% of individual schools had written homework policy (Hill, Spencer, Alston & Fitzgerald, 2001). Of the policies that were found to be written only 56% of them had delineated a specific purpose statement and 100% of those identified stated that the purpose of homework was for the enrichment of students (Hill, Spencer, Alston, & Fitzgerald, 2001).

Although the research showed a small percentage of school districts and schools that reported a written homework policy, there were multitudes of suggestions as to what should be included in policy or guidelines. When discussing the creation of meaningful

homework, Christen and Gomez (1987) suggested that a homework planning committee was necessary which consisted of parents, teachers, and administrators to develop appropriate guidelines. Beyond the initial planning committee Christen and Gomez (1987) further identified that time constraints, feedback expectations of teachers, the weighting of homework on a students' grade, and communication guidelines were necessary for the proper delivery of homework assignments. Among other specific guidelines highlighted by Christen and Gomez (1987) was the importance that homework assignments were never to be assigned as a punishment, rather an extension of the content and lessons presented in class. Pasi (2006) urged teachers to ask themselves the question of if their homework practices served to enhance learning or rather to punish. Vatterott (2014) reported that students risked punishment as well if they could not or chose to not complete assigned work, regardless of the cognitive level of the task, by the time frame authored by the teacher. Further validation of this belief was stated by Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) who indicated that there should never be a connection between homework and behavior management systems as homework would be viewed as a punishment. The first question a school homework policy would be if teachers should have set homework guidelines at all. Murphy and Decker (2001) in their study of Illinois high schools found that 86% of teachers did in fact assign homework compared with only 14% that chose not to. The nature of the courses that were taught did have a difference on if homework was given in this study for instance, 98% of college preparatory teachers assigned homework versus 77% for vocational classes; general education teachers were somewhat in the middle assigning homework 83% of the time (Murphy & Decker, 2001).

The amount of teachers that assigned homework did not align with the number of schools and school districts that had written homework policies or guidelines. There are large discrepancies between school districts that had no formal homework guidelines and other school districts such as Menlo Park School District in New Jersey that set definitive limits on homework guidelines especially those that involved the time restrictions teachers had to adhere to (Simplicio, 2005). Hill, Spencer, Alston, and Fitzgerald (2001), through their research in the state of North Carolina, reported that one of their most crucial findings was that there needed to be more attention placed on the development of homework guidelines and policies in all schools.

With the lack of homework guidelines set in most districts and even more so in individual schools, the American Teacher (2007) reported that it would be a more productive approach to develop homework policy on individual school levels with the assistance of students, parents and teachers. Marzano and Pickering (2007) concurred with these findings and went on further to state that school districts must also recognize the individual needs of students on each grade level as well as continue to focus on the issue of time needed to complete these assignments. School districts, individual schools and teachers would all benefit from aligning their homework guidelines (Cooper, 2001). This included clearly stating the purpose of the assignment, the estimated time frame that an assignment should take, overall time constraints on a daily basis, recognized the responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, the type of assignment based on a student's ability to complete it, and the state of home support a student may have had access to (Cooper, 2001). Van Vooris (2004) included these items when suggesting how

to set up appropriate homework guidelines; these included time spent on task, communication between the school and the home, the purpose of the assignment, the understanding of when it was more beneficial to assign work to a group or to each individual, homework that had been planned to include parental involvement when necessary, and making sure that students had access to the necessary resources needed to accomplish the homework assignment accurately. Pasi (2006) followed up by stating broadly that homework guidelines must be clear and follow policies that were logical to all stakeholders. Making sure that homework was related to the content of the classwork was important (Carr, 2013), just as when homework was assigned. Carr (2013) contested that homework should be assigned at the outset of the class so students could relate the classwork with the assigned homework when the teacher was unavailable to provide assistance. Christen and Gomez (1987) added to the recommendations for what homework guidelines should include in future policy by suggesting that assigned homework should be explained clearly to the students, that students should be included in the decision-making process on what types of homework assignments were to be assigned as well as the amount of time it should take to complete them, that worksheets were not viable homework assignments, that teachers should demonstrate just how to accurately accomplish the homework tasks, that teachers must provide feedback, that teachers find a way to not only communicate homework expectations with parents but also find a way to include them, and above all that teachers remained consistent with their expectations.

The North Carolina research performed by Hill, Spencer, Alston, and Fitzgerald (2001) point out deficiencies that reinforced the need for the aforementioned guidelines to be included in homework guidelines and policies. With only 51% of the schools having some loosely published homework policy statement the need for a more defined structure was necessary that included the clear purpose of homework that was developed by all interest groups, including students, with an evaluation system in place to monitor compliance of schools (Hill, Spencer, Alston, & Fitzgerald, 2001). The overarching message of Hill, Spencer, Alston and Fitzgerald (2001) was that the effectiveness of homework would increase provided it aligned with the educational focus of the school district, recognized the unique capabilities of individual students and communicated clearly with parents on a consistent basis. Cooper (2001) also reported the need for schools to take each student's circumstances into consideration and allow teachers the flexibility needed to best serve the students in their classrooms. Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) added to the list of suggestions about what was needed in homework policy as well. They contested that the purpose of homework should be focused on the practice of new skills, reinforcement of previously taught material, the development of study skills, and to extend content beyond the classroom through enrichment activities (Fairbanks, Clark & Barry, 2005). They also advocated that guidelines as to the frequency of assigned homework was set based on students grade levels and abilities, the time required to complete homework tasks, as well as a clear school district monitoring system be put into place.

One more guideline that had been consistent with research was the need to provide appropriate feedback to students on the assignments they had completed. The majority of the research equated feedback with grading practices as evidenced by Pasi (2006) who reported that was key for teachers to determine what percentage of a students' overall grade would be determined by homework grades. Focusing on the grading repercussions would assist teachers in realizing the necessity of providing the proper resources so students had the ability to complete the homework under the expectations that teachers had set (Pasi, 2006). Holler, Lovelace, and Callender (2001) indicated that it was an unfair practice to grade a students' homework when evaluating progress. They asserted that teachers needed to plan better lessons and support their claim about grading by illustrating that homework should not be used to introduce new topics, that homework often times overlaps homework from other classes causing an unfair amount of overall tasks students were assigned at one time, and that at no time should homework be assigned as a punishment or on content that had not been covered in class. These common practices led to unfair grading practices when trying to ascertain a student's progress (Holler, Lovelace, and Callender, 2001). Homework policies that were written in North Carolina had needed to address some of these issues directly with 49% of the homework policies clearly stating that homework should not be assigned for punishment reasons, 39% detailing the point that homework should not be assigned in lieu of classroom instruction and 37% of the North Carolina homework policies admonishing homework designed as busy work (Hill, Spencer, Alston & Fitzgerald, 2001).

A school's homework philosophy could include a variety of foci. Defining what viable homework assignments look like, the purpose of why homework is assigned, or even a statement about homework expectations could all comprise a school's homework philosophy. A prime example of one aspect included in a philosophy statement would be the school's proclamation that homework should never be used as a punishment but should be focused on making learning a more positive experience (Van Vooris, 2004). Of a more simplistic nature, the desire to create homework assignments that were merely designed to practice and review the content skills that were already taught in class could also be considered a homework philosophy (Danielson, Strom, & Kramer, 2011). In this section the researcher highlighted multiple properties that had been linked to an array of philosophies.

Frey and Fisher (2011) declared that assigned homework should only be administered after students had the opportunity to practice with their fellow students so that they were able to process the content on a deeper level, as they believed that homework should be for the practice of skills they have already been taught as opposed to being asked to produce work on topics that were new. New information and content when sent home without the ability to work with peers and their teachers were ineffective homework strategies (Frey & Fisher, 2011). Vatterott (2011) asserted that both teachers and administrators needed to work together to determine the purpose of homework and subsequently adopt homework guidelines that would support student learning as well as be able to determine when and how learning is taking place. Further reflection by teachers had been suggested by Kohn (2007) as the questions of what theory of learning

was employed and what philosophy was being followed with regard to each assignment that was posed. Vatterott (2010) attempted to address these questions by stating that homework should be a way for teachers to provide appropriate feedback to students about the level of learning they had demonstrated through the assigned task. A teacher should have the flexibility to make adjustments to instruction and given timelines to address the needs of reteaching content and skills that needed remediation (Vatterott, 2010).

Vatterott (2010) proclaimed that the assigning of homework prior to skill acquisition would only lead to student frustration and advanced levels of confusion. Carr (2013) agreed and maintained that homework should have a clear purpose and should not be assigned merely to promote work outside of the school setting. Engrained in the research performed by Carr (2013) was the recommendation that school policy should not simply be driven by the school administration but should involve all partners included but not exclusive to the teachers, students, and parents. Homework, in its traditional sense, had always provided students the opportunity to complete the assigned task in a finite time period where mastery is not the focus and students' grades are often adversely affected versus a much different philosophy presented by Vatterott (2014) where homework should be treated more as a formative assessment and not a summative assessment allowing for content acquisition without the fear of grade deflation.

Van Vooris (2004) claimed that design and actual assignments needed to be monitored much closer and that schools should provide professional development for teachers to reflect on homework guidelines that involved the amount of student time completing homework, the purposes of homework assignments, and the amount of

communication that was provided to families. Including professional development for teachers in a school's philosophy statement was an important step in developing viable homework policy and guidelines. It was incumbent on a school's administration to provide their teachers training on how to differentiate homework assignments, how to determine the advantages and disadvantages of particular homework assignments, when to make adjustments to the instructional practices based on any difficulties students were experiencing with regard to homework assignments, and how to best provide feedback on the homework assignments in a timely manner (Hong, Milgram, & Rowell, 2004).

As teachers clung to the notion that homework would inevitably raise the student achievement levels as well as create more efficient study and organization skills (Holler, Lovelace & Callender, 2001) it would have been prudent for school administrators to include these viewpoints in the overall homework philosophy to obtain buy-in. The purpose of homework was of the utmost importance when developing a homework philosophy making sure to include the instructional focus the staff can rally behind, for example, any belief that homework developed more independent learners or extended the school day beyond the traditional hours to practice and reinforce skills that had previously been taught during the school day (Holler, Lovelace, & Callender, 2001). The research on homework could easily support both the pros and cons of these instructional practices if one spent the time looking (Cooper & Valentine, 2001); for this fact it was not so important to choose the right instructional strategies but to include those instructional strategies believed to be the most beneficial for the students at a particular school building or in a particular school district. Van Vooris (2004) purported that

teachers assign homework for as many as ten different reasons. These ten functions could be categorized into three classifications; those being instructional, communicative, and political (Van Vooris, 2004, p. 56). Review and practice, upcoming lesson preparation, and personal growth were considered instructional functions, with practicing already taught skills being the number one reason for homework assignments (Van Vooris, 2004). Cooper (2001) through his research, supported the statement that the majority of homework falls under the practice and repetition categories. A school's philosophy statement should take into account what the purpose of homework predominately was in the school building and supported it in writing or made adjustments when the purpose was not supported by best practices.

By including school board member, teachers, staff, students and parents in the decision homework guidelines and philosophies could be developed for all stakeholders to support (Hill, Spencer, Alston & Fitzgerald, 2001). The ability to include all stakeholders assisted the school leader in developing a philosophy that met all of the district mandates that may exist. If a school district mandated the frequency, duration, practices, and roles of the stakeholders than it was incumbent on the school district or school building leader to include these constructs in the schools philosophy statement (Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein & Bursuck, 1994).

Communication functions, as defined by Van Vooris (2004), spoke to the necessity to include in one's philosophy the need to have effective communication between parents and teachers as well as students and teachers; by doing so it was possible to increase the interest in homework assignments as well as develop increased completion

rates (Van Vooris, 2004). The need for teachers, students, and parents to work in harmony with one another greatly effected the quality and usefulness of homework assignments, as all three were needed to promote positive results for homework completion and homework accuracy (Walberg, Paschal & Weinstein, 1985).

The types of homework assignments worked in conjunction with the purpose of out-of-school tasks. Frey and Fisher (2011) offered four different types of homework that could be deemed effective; fluency practice, application assignments, spiral review, and extension exercises. Fluency practice, application assignments and extension exercises had been highlighted in earlier research; however, Frey and Fisher (2011) were the first to address the practice of spiral review. The practice of reviewing familiar concepts on a rotating basis throughout the school year allowed for the discontinuation of heavy review periods prior to statewide or standardized assessments (Frey & Fisher, 2011). Teachers should always be encouraged to reflect on the homework tasks that are assigned as well as the purpose of those assignments, weighing the delivered products against the expected outcomes to minimize work that was mindless, boring, and unproductive (Kohn, 2007). Kohn (2007) concluded by stating that the teacher's philosophy should follow the simple rule that homework should only be assigned when it is completely necessary to meet the intended purpose.

Time Parameters and Constraints

The amount of time spent on homework, the frequency of homework assignments and the length of individual homework assignments had been identified as guidelines that

school districts and schools should take into consideration when designing formal written policy. Marzano and Pickering (2007) stated that it is the amount of homework that a student actually completed rather than the actual time spent on homework that dictates whether there will be positive effects derived from the homework itself. Vatterott (2010) stated a somewhat alternate theory by claiming that homework assignments should be time-based rather than task-based. In this opinion, Vatterott was focusing on one student's ability to complete an assignment much faster than another based on each individual's capabilities. Trautwein and Ulrich (2003) reported that the amount of time students spent on homework assignments may be skewed in recent research as the amount of time needed may relate more closely with a student's cognitive ability to complete the assignment which may not be in line with the expected amount of time the teacher believed the assignment would take. Vatterott (2010) went on to say that the amount of work a student may be required to complete may in fact lead to higher levels of frustration for students and leave them questioning their own learning ability. More to the point one student could accomplish a task in 15 minutes while another student in the same class and given the same assignment could take as much as much as four times to complete (Vatterott, 2010). It would stand then that assignments should be given to individual students based on their ability and look for the quality of work that is actually turned in. The feedback on that work could be more valuable to a student that is having competency issues (Vatterott, 2010). For this purpose, it may stand that it would serve the student better to assign less work or fewer problems placing a premium on the quality as opposed to the quantity or amount of time spent on the tasks.

The amount of homework assigned varied from one instructor to another even within the same school building when there were no defined guidelines or sufficient monitoring of the written guidelines in place (Simplicio, 2005). Van Vooris (2004) reported that even across grade levels in a school, one could find large inconsistencies with the required time and quantity of homework assignments. Teachers acted as individual agents on many occasions working in isolation of the other instructors in a school building and could inadvertently assign a student an inordinate amount of homework on any given night pushing the amount of time spent on homework each evening to the point of diminishing return (Simplicio, 2005). Murphy and Decker (2001) in their research of homework in 92 Illinois high schools found that 48% of instructors believed that the average time necessary to complete their homework assignments fell between 16 and 30 minutes. An additional 32% recorded an average time spent on homework each night for their assignment to take between 31 and 45 minutes (Murphy and Decker, 2001). When Murphy and Decker (2001) took the average of all teachers expectations the time necessary to complete one teacher's assignment was approximately 30 minutes. For a student with either six or seven classes during any given day, this would equate to 3-3.5 hours of homework each night. This exceeded the amount of time that Cooper (2001) recommended for high school students by almost twice the amount. The American Teacher (2009) published the same time constraints that Cooper did in 2001 by saying the optimal time for high school students to spend on homework on any given night should fall between 1.5 and 2.5 hours a night. Cooper (2001) stated that high school students on average spend more time than the optimal amount on homework

activities each night based on the courses they may be taking, but also stated that after 2-2.5 hours students faced the reality of diminishing returns on homework with regard to content acquisition and at that point it was compliance that kept the students working. The concept that time spent on homework correlated to higher achievement had been argued on both sides. Cooper and Valentine (2001) studied a number of statewide and national surveys that attempted to find a correlation between the quantity of homework completed with the students' achievement scores. They found that 43 out of 50 correlations did in fact show higher achievement scores for students that completed more homework assignments. The correlation in elementary and middle schools were $r=.00$ and $r=.07$ respectfully while the correlation was much higher in the high schools with a correlation of $r=.25$ (Cooper and Valentine, 2001). The study only looked at the amount of homework completed and did not take into consideration any other variables which could account for the higher correlation. Van Vooris (2004) quoted national research that focused specifically on the number of hours a student would spend on homework each evening. Their results indicated that the percentage of 17 year old students who spent more than 2 hours a night was only 12% (Van Vooris, 2004). Of the same 17 year old sample about 23% of the students accomplished about 1-2 hours of homework nightly, 26% less than an hour and 30-40% of the population claiming to spend no time at all on homework each evening (Van Vooris, 2004). These percentages did not delineate between students who were not assigned homework at all versus students who simply chose not to complete homework assignments they were expected to. When reporting on the relationship between the amount of homework and achievement scores it was

“reported that time on homework was significantly positively correlated with teacher-assigned grades, $r(357) = .26$, $p < .0001$, and with assigned grades after controlling for standardized test scores, $r(267) = .19$, $p < .01$. However, the reported time on homework was not significantly associated with achievement test scores, $r(322) = .10$, $p < .09$, although the data suggested that higher test scores were associated with more time spent on homework” (Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsey, 1999, p. 374). This is to say that the amount of homework spent in a class resulted in higher report card grades and not necessarily higher scores on standardized achievement scores. This variance could very well speak to the nature of appropriate feedback in the form of grading practices that may or may not be aligned to standards based expectations. The report went on to repeat that higher grades were associated with higher completion rates of homework on a consistent basis, even when test scores and extracurricular activities were controlled for (Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsey, 1999).

In reviewing homework policy from across the United States, Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein, and Bursuck (1994) found that there was a distinct trend that illustrated the common practice of assigning homework on more nights than taught with teachers averaging about 2 hours a night on the secondary level. Simplicio (2005) reported that the educational community had decried it sound practice to assign homework on a daily basis but there was a growing faction that believed that all students from kindergarten to college were spending an inordinate and inappropriate amount of time on homework nightly on repetitive and redundant types of assignments.

Kohn (2007) stated that one of the biggest issues with having formalized time constraints on either the amount of time homework is required, the frequency homework assignments were given, or the length of any given assignment gives cause for parents and administrators to question if a particular lesson justified the homework assignment or was homework assigned due to compliance issues. This management issue had caused homework to lose its impact and decrease the motivation students may have had to complete assignments as they were led to believe that the tasks did not have true meaning or purpose (Kohn, 2007). Practices like this may have led to more project-oriented homework assignments, however these assignments were often times inefficient and required low level non-academic skills such as drawing posters or building models (Kohn, 2007). These assignments may have been viewed as more enjoyable by students and allowed them to demonstrate higher levels of creativity, but the content requirements were often low level unless a specific and appropriate rubric was included; even still the amount of time spent on these projects both in and out of school did not always align to the amount of content acquisition students obtained (Kohn, 2007).

Responsibilities

Literature revealed the necessity for the three major stakeholders to have set responsibilities with regard to homework. The construct of responsibility included students, teachers, and administrators. Each of these three groups were equally responsible however existing policies and guidelines placed a large proportion of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the teacher. Teachers on the other hand

contest that students must take on a larger role of responsibility as they believe that students did not make the necessary efforts to perform quality work on homework assignments or at times did not have the fortitude to even complete assignments at all (Holler, Lovelace, and Callender, 2001). Corno and Xu (2004) submitted that an assignment administered by an instructor should result in the students completing the assignments on the teachers schedule and following the expectations set forth by that instructor. Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) took the role of student responsibility even further to include the need for students to ask of assistance when needed after homework has been assigned, organize their homework assignments and track them through management tools such as planners, allocate sufficient time to complete homework assignments, check their work, produce quality work whenever performing tasks, account for all necessary resources to complete the assignments, and turn in the work on time. Also addressed by Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) was the need for students to understand that it was the students' responsibility to acquire the homework assignments that may have been missed due to a scheduled or unscheduled absence from school.

Carr (2013) asserted that students must learn the skills of evaluation and self-reflection in order to play an active role in homework development skills. Vatterott (2014) expounded on this to illustrate that the more a student can self-assess their own capabilities and products the more they will be able to accept and develop ownership of their own content acquisition. Unfortunately, self-assessment skills were not predominate in the secondary school setting and must be reinforced by instructors to assist in the process (Vatterott, 2014). Once students developed an ownership in their

own academic learning the freedom to create their own methods and approaches leading to increased content acquisition allowing for the conscience acceptance of their own successes and their failures (Vatterott, 2014). The ability to self-actualize to this level enabled students to play a much more active and constructive role in the design and completion of their homework assignments (Xu, 2011). The constructive role brought about more interest in homework assignments and allowed the student to self-regulate their behaviors minimizing distractions and outside temptations that may otherwise pull them away from their responsibility of completing their homework (Xu, 2011). Put in the simplest terms Xu (2011) stressed that the realization of this homework management system positively correlated to increased amounts of homework completion rates and led students to much more active roles and provided a stage of greater engagement.

Reinforcing the need for management systems, Corno and Xu (2004) professed that students should learn to break assignments into smaller chunks and accomplish the more complex tasks earlier during the allocated time as they are more fresh and ready to handle the more complicated objectives. This would allow the student an opportunity to utilize the easier portions of the homework to disperse any stress or frustrations that arose during the completion process (Corno & Xu, 2004). Cooper (2011) simplified the nature of student responsibilities to include three overarching obligations: being clear on what the assignment was and what it entailed, completing all homework tasks in the time determined by the instructor, and completing them in an appropriate manner. These three responsibilities as stated by Cooper (2011) encompassed the nature of the more specific roles stated in the previous research. Of note, Corno and Xu (2004) also established the

need for students to develop solid work and study habits as well as management skills that will carry over into the workforce later in life.

The roles and responsibilities required of teachers were far more in depth as they were the individuals primarily tasked with creating homework assignments as well as determining the guidelines those assignments would need in order for students to experience success. Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) stated a number of responsibilities instructors needed to focus on, namely that the identification of the purpose of homework was of paramount importance. Cooper (2011) also stated that the first responsibility of teachers was to clearly indicate the purpose of homework to both students and parents. Establishing guidelines, setting appropriate time limits, communicating with students and parents, posting assignments, modeling the instructional strategies needed to complete the homework, reviewing the homework upon completion, recording students progress appropriately, and providing the necessary resources were additional responsibilities required of teachers if they chose to assign out of school tasks (Fairbanks, Clark & Barry, 2005). Students on the whole believed that it was the responsibility of teachers to assign homework and that it was a vital role in their learning process, but primarily because it has become a traditional instructional practice and many parents had come to expect homework to be assigned (Holler, Lovelace, & Callender, 2001). The issue with the tradition of homework as a practice also came with the belief that most assignments were redundant, boring, not on an appropriate level and poorly managed by instructors in that they grossly underestimated the amount of time it

took to complete a lesson at home causing frustration (Holler, Lovelace, and Callender, 2001).

Homework should be as deliberately planned as in-class lessons where teachers took the time to organize the content, set reasonable and appropriate time limits, and prepared resources in advance (Korkmaz, 2007). When these three things took place homework had the ability to engage students on much higher levels than what was generally witnessed (Corno & Xu, 2004). The ability to properly and completely explain the requirements and expectations of a lesson could not be overrated, especially when these requirements and expectations were put in writing (Vatterott, 2010). Carr (2013) emphasized the point further to state in no uncertain terms that it was clearly the teachers' responsibility to plan and deliver effective homework activities as well as make sure that all students had access to the necessary resources.

The ability for an instructor to utilize a wide array of instructional strategies was key to increased student engagement in homework (Korkmaz, 2007). The ability to understand the individual needs and abilities of each student as well as their unique learning styles provided the foundation for differentiated homework assignments meeting each student where they currently were on a cognitive level (Korkmaz, 2007). Carr (2013) wrote that one of the hallmarks of effective homework was when students took ownership, this occurred when teachers were able to create assignments particular to each student on their own ability level offering higher levels of motivation. Korkmaz (2007) suggested that the internal motivation students needed to be successful was the direct responsibility of the instructor; that the teachers needed to invest time in understanding

the learning styles, abilities, achievement levels and circumstances unique to each of his/her students. Jackson (2007) strengthened this need by taking the responsibility of the teacher to deeper levels stating that the social worlds the students live in as well as the family dynamics were important to understand and that once these conditions were known, homework could be constructed in more manageable terms promoting a more rewarding feeling toward homework as opposed to the normal frustration students reported feeling. This led to more differentiation of homework assignments and provided the flexibility needed for both teachers and students to accomplish the same content acquisition and objectives but in a variety of instructional methods (Pasi, 2006). Korkmaz (2007) summarized these ideals to state that teachers must know their students, care for and respect their students, use multiple teaching techniques, prepare assignments deliberately, use the homework assignments effectively, and promote self-regulation in students. By teaching management techniques and organization skills instructors could increase the self-regulation of students and in time increase completing and quality of homework tasks (Carr, 2013).

Teachers must utilize homework, more specifically the assessment of homework, for two reasons; one was to check for students understanding (Vatterott, 2014), and the second was to ascertain if there were issues or deficiencies in a desired skill that may lead to future potential struggles for students with later content (Carr, 2013).

The responsibilities previously stated left out one remarkable role; the need for the teacher to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback. It was indeed a major responsibility of the teacher to provide feedback to students upon completion of

assignments beyond simply a grade assessment (Korkmaz, 2007). Teacher feedback had been shown to have a positive effect on completion rates of homework (Xu, 2011).

Overall teacher responsibilities could be categorized as needing to assign homework with a purpose, design homework assignments with the understanding that there are a variety of achievement levels and abilities that must be differentiated for students, provide appropriate time constraints to maximize the completion rates of homework, involve and communicate with parents about assignments and expectations, monitor the amount of homework students are being assigned on a daily basis and provide feedback that will enhance the positive culture necessary for effective homework (Marzano & Pickering, 2007). Wilson and Rhodes (2010) included the necessity to provide clear understanding of assignments and how they were to be completed, clear expectations as to when assignments should be turned in, and provided a variety of lessons for students to choose from.

The responsibility of leading the important conversations about the homework philosophy, policy, and guidelines fell directly on the administration's shoulders (Frey & Fisher, 2011). These conversations should consist of what types of homework were appropriate for the various levels of student achievement as well as putting a system in place for teachers to be able to work with their colleagues and continue to develop their own capacity through professional development (Frey & Fisher, 2011). Sometimes this takes courageous conversations that support the higher standards that were expected across the nation while balancing the teacher's beliefs that homework should be commonplace (Kohn, 2007). This included providing the resources necessary for

teachers to assign viable homework assignments as opposed to menial, mundane, and repetitive homework assignments (Korkmaz, 2007). Accomplishing this allowed for the administration to protect students from instructional practices that did not fulfill the purpose and philosophy of school homework guidelines (Kohn, 2007). The balance necessary between homework and extracurricular activities as well as the responsibilities of students outside the school day must be taken into consideration by administrators when developing homework guidelines (Korkmaz, 2007). The professional development that administrators must look to in order to encourage effective homework strategies should be well thought out and centered on the fact that homework should not be simply assigned arbitrarily as something that has just been done traditionally (Holler, Lovelace & Callender, 2001).

Providing clear communication lines between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and teacher and parents was essential.(Korkmaz, 2007). Schools that had experienced success with homework practices had been able to communicate clearly the purpose, goals and expectations of homework guidelines and focus on maintaining communication that would assist parents in recognizing their students' progress toward content mastery (Korkmaz, 2007). Parents needed support from the administration that the instructional practices that were utilized in a school were meant only for the advancement of their students' achievement and that the feedback was viable and appropriate, especially when assigning grade values to formative assessments such as homework (Kohn, 2007). Fairbanks, Clark, and Barry (2005) summarized the responsibilities of administrators to include the following items: school guidelines should

adhere and align to school district guidelines, communication must exist between all stakeholders, a monitoring system must be in place to ensure that teachers are following guidelines in a consistent manner, be aware of teacher's practices throughout the year, support the teachers and students by providing the necessary resources to complete homework accurately, and maintain that teachers respond to homework through feedback that will assist students regardless of their learning styles.

Outcomes

Outcomes, for the purpose of this study, referred to the students' ability to complete homework assignments as well as the feedback teachers provided, often times in the nature of grades. Pasi (2006) explained that homework could actually be detrimental to students when they did not have the ability to perform as expected on homework assignments and tended to frustrate students when the assignments were not used to assist student in the learning process. Holler, Lovelace, and Callender (2001) illustrated this further in their study of Yorktown Middle School by stating that students should not be expected to produce the same level of work on a single assignment based on the fact that there are various levels of achievement present. Teachers must take into account the home situations, current academic levels, socioeconomic status of a family, and the various levels of worth that is placed on education depending on these aspects (Holler, Lovelace & Callender, 2001). Kohn (2007) supported this statement by reporting that not all students benefited from homework assignments the same way, as some students may have already acquired the skills necessary to complete the tasks

accurately while others lacked the fundamental skills needed to perform at the same level. Vatterott (2010) confirmed that schools must cease using the same assignments for all students as the inequities of a myriad of variables could cause the gap to widen between those that could and those that could not. For this reason it was important to differentiate lessons focused on the skills of the individual student to customize the purpose of each assignment. The American Teacher (2009) reported that students from low-socioeconomic communities were disadvantaged when there was a one-size fits all mentality with assignments. Students had responsibilities that lay beyond the classroom that could include extracurricular activities, family constraints, or even jobs (Pasi, 2006). Danielson, Strom, and Kramer (2011) analyzed the Elmbrook School District to find that the gap in student achievement continued to grow based on circumstances outside the school setting, namely a parent's ability to assist the student, time, and technology. Carr (2013) claimed that the ability to combat these inequities was to differentiate assignments as well as compel teachers to find ways to build a feeling of competency in students when required to complete homework assignments without any additional support. Simplicio (2005) employed teachers to recognize the importance of communication, differentiation and types of assignments when developing lessons that would include homework practices.

Teacher feedback was another area that many successful school districts addressed when creating homework guidelines. Often times teachers believed that it was the grade alone that drove students to complete homework and that the grade actually acted as a reward for completion, falling short of providing constructive feedback for

students (Vatterott, 2011). Grades could sometimes negate the feedback that was necessary to foster growth when teachers merely graded students based on completion rates as opposed to accuracy, devaluing the assignment for content acquisition and sending a clear message that the homework assignments really were not that important (Simplicio, 2005). Dueck (2014) concurred that grades that penalized students for incompleteness were ineffective for a variety of reasons; those being that homework became a measure of compliance rather than learner acquisition, hurt the overall grades of struggling students, left students feeling frustrated or even worse overconfident, and enhanced the gap between poverty stricken households. Parents in the Yorktown study felt that the practice of grading homework as a summative assignment was unfair to all students and detracted from the overall purpose and goal of what the homework assignment was meant for (Holler, Lovelace & Callender, 2001). Homework completion rates were more of a measure of the education level of parents and relaxed level of actual feedback causing the apathy attached to homework assignments (Xu, 2011). Grades tended to overinflate the rewards for compliant students rather than provide the necessary feedback for students who struggled on assessments (Vatterott, 2011). Simplicio (2005) asserted that students should be able to work on assignments during the school day where teachers could observe and assist on grade level while at the same time providing the appropriate feedback that would enhance student learning and content acquisition. The nature of feedback on such formative assessments as homework should be more in depth than simply assigning grades and would benefit students far greater than assigning a compliant grade to the task.

Summary

The practice of homework will continue to persist regardless of one's belief on if it is actually beneficial or not. As this is taken into consideration the responsibility falls on the student, the teacher and the administration to create homework guidelines that support the effective use of the practice. The literature review emphasized the need to focus on four major constructs: structure, time and constraints, responsibilities, and outputs. When looking at more delineated guidelines it was imperative that school districts, individual schools, and instructors focus on the purpose of homework policy, the philosophy behind the assigning of homework, the time constraints of daily assignments, the frequency of assignments and the length of the individual tasks, the responsibilities inherent to the student, the teacher and the administration, and the outputs of student capability and teacher feedback. When these guidelines were consistent and monitored for fidelity there was a better likelihood that homework would be a more effective instructional strategy as opposed to the traditional assigning of work. It was incumbent on all parties to keep open lines of communication and that all parties had input throughout the process, but more importantly throughout the application of the instructional practice. Guidelines helped to develop consistency and may have helped to increase higher levels of achievement for individual students when assignments were structured for specific students and specific content level.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The outcomes of this study were intended to evaluate the presence of criteria, identified in the literature review, in 19 high schools as well as the school district guidelines in one urban school district. Additionally, the data were intended to identify a relationship, if any, between the homework guidelines criteria and student achievement as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics. The following research questions were used to gather data to evaluate homework guidelines according to criteria identified in the literature review and the relationship to student achievement.

1. To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?
2. What is the process for establishing the school district homework guidelines and the homework guidelines for each high school in one urban school district?
3. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework guidelines and the school district homework guidelines?
4. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework guidelines for individual high schools and student achievement as measured by 2014-2015 high

school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

Population and Sample

The sample of this study consisted of the 19 traditional high schools in one urban school district in Central Florida. This sample set included all traditional high schools within the identified school district.

Instrumentation

There were two instruments utilized by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The first was an interview tool, found in Appendix C. Each interview question correlated to one of the constructs identified through the literature review as those guidelines that led to effective homework policies and/or practices. The interview responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by coding for common themes and then quantified on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. The matrix, found in Appendix D, was utilized to track the presence of each construct or guideline; however its purpose was not to justify the quality of each item. The matrix was further delineated by four sub-categories. These sub-categories are defined by structure, parameters and constraints, responsibilities, and outcomes. The guidelines identified in the literature review fell under one of the four sub-groups. Current written homework guidelines and the presence of a homework philosophy comprised the structure sub-category. Parameters and constraints were further reduced to frequency of assignments, duration of

assignments given, and length of the assignment itself. The literature review supported the need for responsibility to be placed on students, teachers, and administrators validating the guidelines within the responsibility construct. Finally, outcomes were further defined by student capability and teacher feedback.

Data Collection

The researcher performed a document analysis for each of the 19 traditional high schools as well as on the school district itself. The document analysis probed any written documentation that was available and/or provided by the school and school district.

The researcher conducted interviews with the 19 high school principals. The interview tool consisted of 12 questions with follow-up probes available for 5 of the questions. In order to maximize the output of the potential responses the questions were vetted by two former principals. Input from these two individuals allowed for the modification of the language contained in the questions so the response had a better chance to correlate to the desired information need for appropriate data analysis. The high schools as well as the principal's responses were de-identified for confidentiality.

Glaser and Strauss (2008) explained that the first step to data collection was to identify the important topics that would best categorize the desired data. The topics, for the purpose of this study were structure, parameters and constraints, responsibilities, and outcomes. Beyond the overarching topic headings, each were then broken down further into elements. These elements, or rather guidelines for the purpose of this study, were identified in the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. This matrix was coded based on

the availability of the information either through document analysis or the interview responses. The structure topic was comprised of the presence of a current written policy or set of guidelines as well as a defined philosophy were each worth two points. Each of the other elements, frequency, duration, length, student responsibility, teacher responsibility, administrator responsibility, capability and feedback were all worth one point. The points possible are illustrated in the following table:

Table 2
Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix Scoring

Criteria	Points Possible
Policy	2
Philosophy	2
Frequency	1
Durations	1
Length	1
Student Responsibilities	1
Teacher Responsibilities	1
Administrator Responsibilities	1
Capability	1
Feedback	1
Total	12

The scoring for each criteria was coded based on where the evidence was accessible. The document analysis included any written homework policy or set of

guidelines that was published previously by the school, parent and student handbooks, and website links. Any information that was disclosed or evident through the interview responses was coded with a different identifier. If no information was evident through the document analysis or the interview process the code was defaulted to an X. The coding system for the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix is seen in Table 3.

Table 3
Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix Coding

Source	Code
Curriculum Guide	CG
Faculty Handbook	FH
Interview	I
Parent Handbook	PH
Student Handbook	SH
Website	W
No Data	X

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?

To answer Research Question 1 a thorough document analysis was conducted and coded on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix focusing on written school based curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and school website information and links. Once this document analysis was completed the researcher interviewed each principal to ascertain if there were gaps from the document analysis that could be credited to the schools score. The point total possible on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix for any one school was 12 points. An analysis was then performed to quantify the extent to which homework guidelines for the 19 high schools, as well as the school district, aligned with the recommended criteria as identified through the literature review.

Research Question 2

What is the process for establishing the school district homework guidelines and the homework guidelines in each high school in one urban school district?

To answer Research Question 2 data were coded based on the interview responses from interview questions 3 and 4. Responses were coded for similarities and differences based on the responses from the 19 traditional high school principals. An analysis was completed on a school district level to identify individuals as well as departments that were involved in establishing the overall homework guidelines. The purpose of this question was to determine the stakeholders who were involved in the decision-making process as well as the process involved with how and why the particular guidelines concerning homework were chosen.

Research Question 3

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework policy and the school district homework policy?

To answer Research Question 3 data from the document analysis and the interview responses were coded into the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix for each of the 19 high schools along with data in regard to school district guidelines that were published. The initial comparison was made based on the total number of acquired points for each school and the baseline set from the analysis of the school district as a whole. Secondary comparisons were made as to the constructs that were most common and consistent with the school district guidelines. For the purpose of this study, the presence of the guideline was enough to qualify for scoring. There was no judgement made on the quality or nature of the elements within the guideline itself.

Research Question 4

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework policy in individual high schools and student achievement as measured by 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

To answer Research Question 4 the data were gathered for the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics and then were related to the number of points achieved by each school on the Homework

Guideline Criteria Matrix. A Pearson r correlation was completed to establish the relationship between the matrix score and the mean student achievement scores for each school. A secondary analysis was completed identifying the the relationship between student achievement scores and the presence of particular criteria within the four constructs.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methodology utilized in this study. A document analysis was conducted by the researcher that included five documents, curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and websites. Information was coded on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix, created by this researcher, if it was evident in any of the documents. Once this was complete interviews were conducted with the 19 high school principals. Any homework guidelines that were articulated during the interview process were added to the matrix. The schools were given a point total and that data was included in Tables 6 and 7. Research questions 1, 2, and 3 utilized the data from these analyses to ascertain the findings. Research question 4 required a Pearson r correlation calculation to examine the significance of any relationships between the matrix scores and the 2014-2015 student achievement metrics. Chapter 4 illustrates the findings from the research conducted.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate homework guidelines according to criteria identified through the literature review. In addition, the the goal was to examine the relationships, if any, between existing homework guidelines and student achievement results as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics for high schools in one urban school district. Information was gathered through a document analysis which included such items as curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and school website links. Upon completion of the document analysis, interviews were conducted with all 19 high school principals within the identified urban school district. Results were reported through frequency tables and statistical tests, and descriptive narratives were provided for each. Chapter 4 consists of the source document descriptions, data, results, statistical test results, and narratives to address the four research questions in this study.

Source Documents

The source documents that were included in the document analysis were curriculum guides, faculty handbooks, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and school website links. Each of these will be described briefly for clarification purposes.

Curriculum Guide

The curriculum guides for each school in the identified urban school district were uniform for all 19 high schools. These documents were produced by the school district and they provided the school an opportunity to add information specific to their particular school curriculum. Each curriculum guide included a message from the school district superintendent, diploma tracks for each grade level cohort, testing information, core content course progressions, as well as information pertaining to dual enrollment, advanced placement, on-line course options, state university admissions, scholarships and career planning. This information was consistent and included in all 19 high school curriculum guides.

Additional information was provided for inclusion by each school. This information consisted of, but was not limited to, administrative contacts, unique academic tracts available to students such as magnet opportunities, advanced placement, or International Baccalaureate programs, general information the school determined necessary, and the complete course offerings for the school with descriptions.

Faculty Handbook

Faculty handbooks were written and maintained by the school. These documents contained a wide variety of subjects and were packaged in different ways. Of the 19 high schools in the identified school district 18 published faculty handbooks. These handbooks ranged from 17 pages to 125 pages. The average length of the handbooks in this large urban school district was 61.5 pages long. Each of these documents required

the faculty member to sign an acknowledgement page. The array of faculty handbooks included such items as school and testing calendars, bell schedules, administrative team responsibilities, vision and mission statements, instructor responsibilities, operational procedures and responsibilities, classroom planning and management expectations, school district management directives, school maps, and emergency evacuation plans.

Parent Handbook

The school district published the Parent Handbook for all schools in the school district. This document was a 32-page guide for parents to receive information necessary to navigate various departments and options available. Included in the parent handbook were frequently called numbers, overall school district calendar, generic curriculum and school option choices, special programs available to parents, guidance services, pupil progression plans, state and national testing platforms, immunization information, volunteer services, and impact and facility reports. There were no school specific items included in the parent handbook as it was distributed by the school district.

Student Handbook

Student handbooks were published by the school itself if so desired. Student handbooks included, but were not limited to, providing information about school calendars, administrative personnel and responsibilities, school maps, support service information, student responsibilities, testing calendars, grading scales, attendance and tardy policies, transportation information, and discipline expectations. Of the 19 high

schools in this study, 5 schools published a formal student handbook. These handbooks ranged between 15 pages to 52 pages with an average length of 28 pages.

School Website

Each school in the identified school district had a school based website. Each website had uniform links, however they controlled the information provided in each link. Website links included, but were not limited to, academics and curriculum, athletics, clubs and organizations, faculty and staff, grades, guidance, media center, parents, school information, and students. All 19 high school had up-to-date information posted on their school website.

Research Question 1

To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?

Data were collected through the document review as well as through the interview process. The Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix identified which source was found to reference each construct and can be found in Appendix E of this study. Table 4 lists the five documents that were included in the document review and the number of schools that utilized each source for communication regarding homework policy and guidelines.

Table 4
Frequency of High Schools Utilizing Potential Available Sources

Source	Frequency of Schools
Curriculum Guide (CG)	19
Faculty Handbook (FH)	18
Parent Handbook (PH)	19
Student Handbook (SH)	5
Website (W)	19

All 19 high schools published a curriculum guide, parent handbook, and school-based website. All but one school, High School 2, published a faculty handbook that required a signature by all staff members. Student handbooks were identified in only five high schools. Those were High Schools 2, 12, 14, 16, and 19. All schools utilized at least four of the five sources and four high schools (High Schools 12, 14, 16, and 19) utilized all five sources.

Upon completion of the document review and interviews the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix was completed. Each field was documented by the source document code where the reference was cited. For example, if the reference was found in the faculty handbook it was documented in the rubric as FH. If the guideline was present in more than one source it was coded to indicate all sources. However, the point total was determined merely by the presence of the guideline itself, not by the frequency it was referenced in multiple documents. The source location of the guidelines for all 19 high schools are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
Location of Guideline Citations

Source	Number of Guideline Citations
Curriculum Guide (CG)	5
Faculty Handbook (FH)	46
Interview (I)	37
Parent Handbook (PH)	0
Student Handbook (SH)	2
Website (W)	3

Of the 93 guidelines referenced by the 19 high schools 83 (89%) were identified in either the faculty handbook provided by the school or through the interview responses. The school received credit in the matrix if there was a written statement found in any of the documents or if the school principal articulated the criteria to the staff as evidenced by their interview responses. Principal responses included references to faculty meetings and professional learning community (PLC) meetings as the most common avenue of verbal articulation regarding homework guidelines.

The documents that parents and students had access to include the curriculum guide, parent handbook, student handbook, and website links. The guidelines included in these sources had a total of 11% of all homework references. Of the 19 high schools studied, 14 (74%) schools did not have one reference to homework guidelines in either the curriculum guide, parent handbook, student handbook, or website links. Five high

schools did reference one of these sources representing 26% of the 19 high schools studied.

The points for each guideline were quantified and the totals for each of the 19 high schools as well as the school district are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Total Points Acquired (12 Points Possible)

School	Number of Points Acquired	% Total Possible
High School 3	10	83
High School 13	10	83
High School 19	10	83
High School 17	8	67
High School 8	7	58
High School 10	7	58
High School 14	7	58
High School 1	6	50
High School 5	6	50
High School 6	6	50
High School 9	6	50
High School 18	6	50
High School 7	5	42
High School 15	5	42
High School 12	4	33
High School 11	3	25
High School 4	2	17
High School 16	2	17
High School 2	1	8
School District	0	0

High Schools 3, 13, and 19 scored 10 out of the possible 12 points, which was the highest point total achieved. Each of these schools did not receive points for referencing student capability as a factor for homework; two did not reference the duration of the assignments; and the third did not address the length of the homework assignments. The guidelines that were addressed in the top scoring High Schools 3, 13, and 19 were consistent with one another. There were four schools (High Schools 2, 4, 11, and 16) that addressed three or fewer criteria across all sources analyzed. Seven of the eight total guidelines referenced by these four schools centered around responsibilities. All four schools referenced teacher responsibility, two schools referenced student responsibilities, and one addressed administrator responsibilities.

Of the 19 high schools 12 (63%) acquired six or fewer points on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. High Schools 3, 8, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 19 scored between 7 and 10 points, or more than 50% documentation of homework guidelines, representing 37% of the high schools. Five high schools (26%) scored in the lower third of point acquisition, eleven schools (58%) scored in the middle third, and three schools (16%) scored in the top third of possible points. The majority of schools acquired anywhere from 5 to 8 points out of the possible 12. Table 7 shows the score each high school scored for each of the criteria

Table 7
Homework Criteria Points by High School

High School	Structure		Parameters and Constratints			Responsibilities			Output		Total
	Policy	Procedure	Frequency	Duration	Length	Student	Teacher	Administrator	Capability	Feedback	
1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
3	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	10
4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
5	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	6
6	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	6
7	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	5
8	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	7
9	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
10	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	6
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
12	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
13	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	10
14	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	7
15	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	5

High School	Policy	Procedure	Frequency	Duration	Length	Student	Teacher	Administrator	Capability	Feedback	Total
16	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
17	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	8
18	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	6
19	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	10
School District	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The number of schools that referenced each of the 10 criteria are found in Tables 8 and 9. Table 8 shows the results for the constructs of Structure and Parameters and Constraints categories and Table 9 illustrates the data for the Responsibility and Outcome categories

Table 8
Frequency of Schools Citing Structure and/or Parameters and Constraints

	Policy	Philosophy	Frequency	Duration	Length
Frequency of Schools	15	10	6	3	3

Structure

The school was given credit for having a written policy if any of the other nine guidelines were found to be present in the document review. Three schools (High Schools 2, 11, and 16) did not have any written references found through the document review. High School 4 cited an ambiguous reference to the student’s responsibility to complete all work assigned in class or out, but did not reference homework specifically. This is why High School 4 was not given credit for having a written policy, as the principal clearly stated that the school does not have any homework guidelines. Just over half of the principals, 53%, had written statements of what homework should include or were able to articulate conversations and directives that were issued to the staff. For instance, the 10 high schools that were given credit for having a homework philosophy indicated that the major use of homework that could be justified in their schools were for the purpose of providing additional practice.

Constraints and Parameters

When analyzing the data regarding constructs of constraints and parameters that were or were not present a drastic drop in criteria met were found. With regard to the frequency of homework assignments, or the number of days homework was to be assigned, only 31% or six schools referenced defined limitations. Even fewer, 16% or three schools, defined any limitations provided by the school in terms of the length of the assignments or the time required to complete assignments outside the normal school day.

Table 9
Frequency of Schools Citing Responsibilities and/or Outcomes

	Student Responsibility	Teacher Responsibility	Administrator Responsibility	Capability	Feedback
Frequency of Schools	7	14	11	5	12

Responsibility

In the responsibility construct there were many more criteria present than in the constructs of parameters and constraints. Student responsibilities were noted by 37% of the high schools and centered around the students' duty to complete their homework assignments in a timely manner. The responsibility of completing homework after an absences was addressed by the seven existing guidelines. The majority of the schools spoke to the responsibility of the teacher. The collection of homework, the provision of grades, and the development of homework were the responsibilities named in the written guidelines of 14 or 74% of the high schools.

The responsibilities of the administrators noted related to monitoring how homework assignments were administered. Also noted was how to manage conflicts

between teachers and parents concerning the amount of homework that was being assigned or the nature of the feedback that was provided.

Feedback

In the criteria of feedback, only five (26%) of the schools expected teachers to assign homework based on the students' ability or mastery of a particular standard. All principals spoke to the need for appropriate accommodations regarding Individual Education Plans for exceptional education students as well as 504 Plans for students who fell under the American Disabilities Act; however the basis of differentiating assignments outside these federal mandates were addressed by just over one fourth of the high schools. The feedback that was identified by the 12 high schools ranged from the grading of each problem assigned to the sheer compliance of turning something in for credit. Principals expressed a desire for assignments to be graded, and feedback provided, but did not in any case, mandate that each homework assignment be graded for accuracy.

The school district scored zero points, as there were no guidelines found in any source document. There was no school district homework policy written in the identified urban school district.

Research Question 2

What is the process for establishing the school district homework criteria and homework guidelines for each high school in one urban school district?

The researcher found no written homework guidelines for the school district. There were no school board policies that reference homework or recommended

homework guidelines. The two documents that were produced by the school district for distribution at the schools, the curriculum guide and the parent handbook, had no references to the instructional practice of homework. Two schools (High Schools 3 and 5) included their own reference in the curriculum guide; however, this was information the school provided. There was no school district oversight for how homework was assigned, utilized, or monitored on the school level.

For individual high schools there were a variety of individuals that were included in the formation of homework guidelines at their sites. Of the 19 high schools two principals indicated that they were unaware of who was involved in the creation of the homework guidelines because they were not the principal at the time the guidelines were established. Three schools did not have any written guidelines (High Schools 2, 11, and 16) although they did indicate that they have articulated to staff a few expectations that paralleled the guidelines included in this study. The participants for each high school are illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10
Individuals or Groups Involved in Establishing Homework Guidelines

School	Principal	Assistant Principal	Deans	Instructional Coaches	Department Chairs/PLCs	Students
High School 1	Y	Y	Y			
High School 2	Y				Y	
High School 3	Y			Y	Y	
High School 4						
High School 5	Y	Y		Y		
High School 6	Y	Y	Y			
High School 7						
High School 8	Y	Y	Y	Y		
High School 9	Y					
High School 10	Y	Y	Y	Y		
High School 11		Y			Y	
High School 12	Y	Y	Y	Y		
High School 13						

School	Principal	Assistant Principal	Deans	Instructional Coaches	Department Chairs/PLCs	Students
High School 14					Y	
High School 15	Y	Y		Y		
High School 16						
High School 17	Y	Y		Y	Y	
High School 18	Y	Y		Y		
High School 19						

Note. Y indicates the individual or groups were included

Of the 14 high schools that had established homework guidelines with their current school building leaders, 12 school principals were actively involved in the process. Two schools (High Schools 11 and 14) turned the leadership over to other individuals; the homework guideline process in High School 11 was led by an assistant principal, and the department chairs owned the process in High School 14. High School 9 was the only high school where the school building principal was the lone active participant in setting homework guidelines for the school. Assistant principals were involved in 10 of the 14 high schools (71%) and deans were involved in 5 of the 14 high schools (36%). Instructional coaches and department chairs comprised the instructional staff input at these schools with eight (57%) schools utilizing instructional coaches, and five (36%) schools involved their department chairs. None of the 14 high schools reported the inclusion of students in the process of setting homework guidelines.

Once the participants were identified, each school leader expressed how the homework guidelines were established. Table 11 shows the method utilized by each of the 19 high schools.

Table 11
Methods Utilized to Establish Homework Guidelines

School	Collaborative Meeting	Principal Decision	Previously Established	Unknown
High School 1	X			
High School 2	X			
High School 3	X			
High School 4				X
High School 5	X			
High School 6	X			
High School 7			X	
High School 8	X			
High School 9		X		
High School 10	X			
High School 11	X			
High School 12	X			
High School 13			X	
High School 14	X			
High School 15	X			
High School 16				X
High School 17	X			
High School 18	X			
High School 19			X	

Note. X indicates the method utilized.

The principal of High School 9 established the homework guidelines without any stakeholders' input stating that the principal sought "...general best practices that had been picked up over the years." Principals of High Schools 7, 13, and 19 explained that the current homework guidelines had been established prior to their principalship. The school building principal of High School 19 stated that although the guidelines were previously established, the school's current administrative team reviewed the guidelines and continued their implementation. Two schools, already identified, did not have any written guidelines, thus no procedures were necessary to document in this section. The remaining 13 schools utilized collaborative meetings with the stakeholders already identified in setting the school's homework guidelines.

Members of the administrative team were involved in setting the homework guidelines in 13 of the 14 schools. The remaining school, High School 14, turned the process over entirely to the teacher leaders. The principal, "...wanted the teachers to have the autonomy" to make the decisions concerning guidelines that they would ultimately be implementing. The principal of High School 16, although not having any established guidelines, stated that if the school intended to implement school-wide guidelines that students would be included in the decision-making. This was the only reference from the 19 high school interviews that indicated the inclusion of students in any decision-making capacity.

Research Question 3

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework guidelines and the school district homework guidelines?

After reviewing the school board policies of the school district that was studied, as well as searching any and all website links, it was established that there were no written school district homework guidelines. There were no school board policies that referred to homework practices nor any suggested criteria published as expectations within the individual schools. Two of the five documents that were reviewed on a school level basis were developed, written, and produced by the school district. Those two documents were the curriculum guide and the parent handbook. Neither of these school district produced documents referenced homework expectations or criteria. The school building leaders were permitted to include school related items in the curriculum guide. Of the 19 high schools studied, only 2 (11%) chose to add homework references.

Research Question 4

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework guidelines for individual high schools and student achievement as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

Data were gathered for the five student achievement metrics. Table 12 lists the 19 high schools with their matrix score and the 2014-2015 graduation rates along with reading and mathematics scores for both the SAT and ACT.

Table 12

High School Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix score and Student Achievement Scores (2014-2015)

School	Homework Matrix Score (Maximum 12)	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
High School 1	6	85.6	19.94	18.51	507.41	498.15
High School 2	1	94.3	21.63	19.69	560.77	542.31
High School 3	10	90.7	20.10	18.52	457.05	439.58
High School 4	2	92.9	23.11	22.17	496.69	494.32
High School 5	6	83.4	19.01	17.83	483.09	465.64
High School 6	6	98.4	22.77	21.09	508.70	494.50
High School 7	5	89.9	18.38	16.72	417.84	390.72
High School 8	7	83.9	21.78	20.73	470.29	457.78
High School 9	6	91.9	23.28	22.04	497.83	487.07
High School 10	7	84.4	21.13	19.85	480.27	471.64
High School 11	3	86.9	18.75	16.68	380.36	369.71
High School 12	4	92.4	21.16	20.14	491.23	485.10
High School 13	10	91.2	21.97	20.64	498.71	487.36

School	Homework Matrix Score (Maximum 12)	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
High School 14	7	91.9	24.30	22.61	524.37	519.19
High School 15	5	76.7	17.79	17.09	397.98	397.55
High School 16	2	89.3	20.22	18.39	448.44	433.16
High School 17	8	83.5	18.13	16.47	394.03	375.74
High School 18	6	84.3	19.65	18.55	455.80	448.66
High School 19	10	92.9	20.54	19.94	468.91	462.36

Note. ACT and SAT scores are reported as the school mean

The four schools that scored the most points on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix were High Schools 3, 13, 17, and 19. Table 13 shows the mean student achievement results for those four high schools when combined.

Table 13
Mean Student Achievement Scores for High Schools 3, 13, 17, and 19

High Schools	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
3, 13, 17 & 19	89.58%	20.19	18.89	454.68	441.26

The four schools that scored the fewest points on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix were High Schools 2, 4, 11, and 16. Table 14 shows the mean student achievement results for those four high schools.

When looking at the mean scores for the five identified metrics, the mean was actually higher for the four schools that scored the lowest on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix.

Table 14
Mean Student Achievement Scores for High Schools 2, 4, 11, and 16

High Schools	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
2, 4, 11 & 16	90.85%	20.93	19.69	471.57	459.88

Table 15 lists the minimum and maximum scores for each of the five student achievement metrics, the overall matrix score and the four individual constructs. Maximum scores for each of the items are as follows: overall matrix score (12), graduation rates (100), ACT reading and mathematics (36) (ACT test website, 2015), SAT reading and mathematics (800) (SAT test website, 2015), Structure (4), Parameters

and Constraints (3), Responsibilities (3), and Output (2). The mean and standard deviation for each of the five student achievement metrics, the overall matrix score and the four individual constructs are included for reference.

Table 15

Minimum, Maximum, Mean, and Standard Deviation Descriptive Statistics

Metric	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Graduation Rate	76.70	98.40	88.66	5.16
ACT Reading	17.79	24.30	20.72	1.87
ACT Mathematics	16.47	22.61	19.35	1.92
SAT Reading	380.36	560.77	470.51	46.95
SAT Mathematics	369.71	542.31	458.98	48.07
Overall Matrix Score	1.00	10.00	5.85	2.65
Structure	0.00	4.00	2.63	1.64
Parameters and Constraints	0.00	2.00	0.63	0.76
Responsibility	0.00	3.00	1.68	0.89
Outcomes	0.00	2.00	0.89	0.57

A Pearson r correlation was calculated using the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix score as the independent variable and the five student achievement results as the dependent variables. Table 16 illustrates the results for each of the five tests.

According to the Pearson r Correlation Table (Steinberg, 2011), at n-2 (17) for a two-tailed test at .05% the critical r is .456. Based on these results there were no significant relationships found between the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix and any of the five student achievement metrics. Only ACT mathematics showed a positive correlation at .063 which indicated that as the matrix scored increased there would be an increase in the ACT math score. The negative Pearson r correlation for the other four student achievement metrics would indicate that the metric would decrease as the matrix score increased. In either case there were no Pearson r correlations that showed any statistically significant relationship.

Table 16
Correlation Between Homework Guideline Matrix Scores and Student Achievement Metrics

Independent Variable	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
Overall Matrix Score	-.081	-.002	.063	-.067	-.068

The 10 guidelines were separated into four subgroups or constructs. The four constructs were Structure, Parameters and Constraints, Responsibilities, and Output. A Pearson r correlation was calculated for each of the four constructs individually. The results are as follows.

According to the Pearson r Correlation Table (Steinberg, 2011), at n-2 (17) for a two-tailed test at .05% the critical r is .456. Based on the results there were no statistically significant relationships found between the Structure Construct and any of the student achievement metrics. There was a positive correlation with each of the four ACT and SAT exam scores, however there were no correlations that were found to be statistically significant.

Table 17

Correlation Between Homework Guideline Structure and Student Achievement Metrics

Independent Variable	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Mathematics	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
Structure	-.209	.078	.145	.105	.100

According to the Pearson r Correlation Table (Steinberg, 2011), at n-2 (17) for a two-tailed test at .05% the critical r is .456. Based on the results there were no statistically significant relationships found between the Parameters and Constraints Construct and any of the student achievement metrics. Parameters and Constraints showed the highest positive correlations of the four constructs, however there were no correlations that met the threshold of statistical significance.

Table 18

Correlation Between Homework Guideline Parameters and Constraints and Student Achievement Metrics

Independent Variable	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Math	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
Parameters and Constraints	.240	.249	.180	.178	.303

According to the Pearson r Correlation Table (Steinberg, 2011), at n-2 (17) for a two-tailed test at .05% the critical r is .456. Based on the results there were no

statistically significant relationships found between the Responsibilities Construct and any of the student achievement metrics. This construct showed the greatest negative correlations with regard to the five student achievement metrics; however there were no correlations that met the threshold of statistical significance.

Table 19
Correlation Between Homework Guideline Responsibilities and Student Achievement Metrics

Independent Variable	Graduation Rate	ACT Reading	ACT Math	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
Responsibilities	.059	-.319	-.291	-.387	-.396

According to the Pearson r Correlation Table (Steinberg, 2011), at n-2 (17) for a two-tailed test at .05% the critical r is .456. Based on the results there were no statistically significant relationships found between the Output Construct and any of the student achievement metrics. Each of the five Pearson r correlations calculated resulted in a negative result.

Table 20
Correlation Between Homework Guideline Outcomes and Student Achievement Metrics

Independent Variable	Graduation Rates	ACT Reading	ACT Math	SAT Reading	SAT Mathematics
Outcomes	-.273	-.058	-.005	-.254	-.226

Table 21 shows each of the Pearson r correlations by student achievement metric for the overall matrix score as well as each of the constructs to illustrate the correlations in relation to each other.

Table 21
Correlations for Student Achievement Metrics by Construct

Student Achievement Metric	Overall Matrix Score	Structure	Parameters and Constraints	Responsibilities	Outputs
Graduation Rate	-.081	-.209	.240	.059	-.273
ACT Reading	-.002	.078	.249	-.319	-.058
ACT Mathematics	.063	.145	.180	-.291	-.005
SAT Reading	-.067	.105	.178	-.387	-.254
SAT Mathematics	-.068	.100	.303	-.396	-.226

Summary

In this chapter data were gathered to answer four research questions in regard to existing homework guidelines, how the homework guidelines were created, the alignment to school district homework guidelines, and any relationship that existed between homework guidelines and student achievement metrics. The Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix was completed through a document analysis and interviews that were conducted with the 19 high school principals. A Pearson r was calculated to examine the relationship of the overall matrix score and student achievement results as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, ACT reading and mathematics scores, and SAT reading and mathematics scores.

There were no school district wide homework guidelines published or articulated to the schools. Each school was able to determine what guidelines were important enough to set expectations to. Collaborative methods were the most common avenue of establishing guidelines, and the guidelines that existed in the 19 high schools varied greatly. Out of a possible 12 points schools scored anywhere between 1 and 10 points.

When determining the relationship between the overall Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix score and the student achievement metrics it was found that no significant relationship existed. This finding was consistent with the four constructs as well in that no statistically significant relationship existed when examining more individual guidelines.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter 4 contained the data and analyses for the research questions related to high school homework guidelines in one urban school district. Chapter 5 includes the summary of the analysis, a discussion on the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for continued research. Included in the summary are the problem of practice, purpose of the study, research questions, a review of the significance of the study as well as the methodology of data collection. The intended purpose of the summary, implications, and recommendations is to outline the current practices with regard to aligning homework guidelines to research-based recommendations, the process by which the high schools in this research study utilized to set homework guidelines, and any relationship there may be between homework guidelines and student achievement as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

Summary of the Study

Research on homework guidelines and homework policy has been limited, as well as the impact on student achievement results (Cooper & Valentine, 2001). There are two ways to increase the learning opportunities for students; namely to lengthen the school day and to provide for greater content exposure (Murphy & Decker, 2001). The purpose of this study was to identify guidelines that have been established in 19 high schools in

one large urban school district and how they related to best practices described through an extensive literature review. The guidelines that were identified included a written homework policy, philosophy statement, limitations on the frequency, duration and length of each homework assignment, responsibilities of the student, the teacher, and the administrator, student ability, and teacher feedback. The study also attempted to seek the relationship, if any, to student achievement results.

Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein, and Bursuck (1994), in a study of 267 school districts, it was found that 35.2% of the school districts had a formal written homework policy. In the state of North Carolina, in 2001, 39% of the school districts reported a system-wide policy (Hill, Spencer, Alston & Fitzgerald, 2001). There was a similar study that was conducted by Murphy and Decker (2001) that found, in the state of Illinois, 31% of the 92 high schools studied had a formal homework policy. These results support the claim of Christen and Gomez (1987) that homework guidelines that provide consistency of expectations in what an effective assignment looks like, the time requirements, and how it is used are sorely lacking and needed in formal homework policies.

Since there is little research on individual homework topics the researcher identified 10 guidelines through literature that may allow for a larger effect size with regard to homework as an instructional practice. A document review and interview of the school building principal sought to relate current practices at each school with practice recommended in previously published research.

There were five documents that were identified for review. These included the school's curriculum guide, faculty handbook, parent handbook, student handbook, and websites. It was determined that the curriculum guide and the parent handbook were written and published by the school district and although each school was permitted to include additional information specific to their site, there were only two schools that included any remarks concerning homework guidelines. It became apparent that the school district did not intend to standardize homework guidelines across the schools consistently, but allow for the autonomy to pass to the individual schools themselves. The faculty handbook, the student handbook and the website content were completely determined by the schools.

The study consisted of a document analysis, 19 interviews, and a quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis converted the number of homework criteria met into a numerical value and calculated Pearson's r was calculated to determine if there was a relationship that existed between the score on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix present and student achievement results.

This study included four research questions.

1. To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?
2. What is the process for establishing the school district homework guidelines and the homework guidelines for each high school in one urban school district?

3. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework guidelines and school district homework guidelines?
4. To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework guidelines for individual high schools and student achievement as measured by 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics.

Research question 1 required the data obtained through the document analysis and the 19 high school principal interviews. The information gathered was recorded on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. The total possible points on the matrix was 12 and an analysis of the sources were performed to quantify the total points acquired by each of the 19 high schools, as well as the school district, to determine how aligned the existing guidelines were with the recommended guidelines found through the literature review.

Research question 2 required the information obtained from questions 3 and 4 of the interview. The individuals that were involved in the writing or development of homework guidelines and the process that was followed was reviewed and reported in the findings.

Research question 3 was intended to review the relationship between homework guidelines of the individual schools to the homework guidelines of the school district. Upon review, there were no school district-wide homework guidelines found to exist as the responsibility to develop homework guidelines fell upon the schools.

Research question 4 sought to render the relationship, if any, between the number of homework guidelines at the high schools and their student achievement results. The existence of guidelines were quantified using the Homework Guideline Criteria Rubric and Pearson's r was calculated to determine if any relationships could be identified.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent do the homework guidelines in one urban school district align with the recommended criteria in the literature: a philosophy statement, frequency, time required, length of the assignment, responsibilities of the student, teacher, and administrator, student capability, and teacher feedback?

Faculty handbooks were published by 18 out of the 19 high schools. Only High School 4 did not produce a faculty handbook. The preponderance of written annotations concerning homework were found in the faculty handbook, 46 of the 56 (82%) written guidelines were found therein. None of the 18 faculty handbooks referenced the guidelines of homework duration, homework length, or administrative responsibilities. At least one homework guideline was referenced in 13 of the 18 (72%) faculty handbooks. The faculty handbook by far was the most common place to find written homework guidelines, but the sections were very short. In faculty handbooks that averaged 61.5 pages and were as lengthy as 125 pages the references could be easily overlooked.

Parent handbooks were written and distributed by the school district. There were no areas for schools to include any specific information and were designed to address

parents of all grade levels. There were no sections devoted to district homework guidelines or expectations and rendered no data to be included in the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix.

Student handbooks were provided by only five of the high schools in this study. Of the five student handbooks only two schools were cited as having anything in them that would qualify as homework criteria. High School 19 referenced the length of student homework assignments and High School 4 had an ambiguous reference to the student's responsibility to complete all assigned work both in class and out. It was apparent that student handbooks, published in only 26% of the high schools and only encompassing 2 of the 56 written citations (4%), were not a notable reference for expected homework criteria.

Each high school maintains a website on the school district portal. The contents of each website were established by the school yet contained common elements as established by the school district, for instance lists of faculty members, administrators, extracurricular opportunities, guidance contacts, and special programs. Each of the 19 high schools did in fact maintain their websites and there were a total of three references to homework criteria out of the 56 (5%) written guidelines located; however those three references were all for one of the 19 high schools, an untapped portal for communication.

Of the five referenced documents, four were available for student and parent use. Only the faculty handbook was not available for student or parent perusal. There were a total of 56 written homework guideline references in the five documents that were reviewed by the researcher, only 10 of which, or 18%, were made available to students or

parents. There were three high schools, High School 2, High School 11, and High School 16, that had no written references to any homework guidelines, but discussed between one and three of the recommended criteria through faculty meetings or professional learning community meetings.

Interviews yielded the second highest amount of information related to existing homework guidelines, behind the faculty handbooks with 40% or 37 of the 93 references found there. All interviews were conducted with the school building principals at their school sites. Three principals (High Schools 7, 13, and 19) indicated that any homework guidelines that existed were established during the previous administration. The principal of High School 7 expressed the plan moving forward is to revisit those guidelines. The principal of High School 13 said he was going to continue the practices that had already been established and the principal of High School 19 stated that the administrative team constantly reviews existing policies and that no changes were expected. The principals of High Schools 9 and 10 adjusted the homework guidelines upon their appointment at their respective schools.

The points acquired by each school had a maximum of 10. The actual descriptive statistics were range 9, mode 6, and mean 5.84. The school district scored zero points and was not included in the listed metrics. Three high schools, High School 3, High School 13, and High School 19, scored a total of 10 points, the highest point total achieved. The three lowest scores showed the presence of one, two or three homework criteria for the schools. The range of 1-10 indicates a wide span of homework guideline criteria present across the 19 high schools. This range could be explained by the lack of

school district-wide guidelines and expectations outlined for the schools. The curriculum guide and the parent handbook are documents produced by the school district and neither one outlined homework guidelines.

The two criteria that showed the most frequency across the 19 high schools, outside of having a written policy of sorts were Teacher Responsibility and Feedback, 14 and 12 points respectively. These criteria were dependent on the teacher and the expectations placed on them by the principal. With teacher responsibility and feedback having the greatest frequency, it is understandable that 49% of the written guidelines were found in the faculty handbook. Items that spoke to the Frequency, Duration, and Length of the assignments were addressed far more infrequently, 6, 3, and 3 points respectively. Also scoring in less than half of the schools were any criteria pertaining to Student Responsibility and Capability, with 7 and 5 points respectively.

The lack of guidelines present in the curriculum guides, as well as the parent handbook, both of which are published by the school district, illustrated the lack of school district-wide expectations. There were no website references on the district level as well. The autonomy of setting homework guidelines fell on the school and the vast array of what was present in each school, as indicated by the data, showed that there was no oversight on a district level. Even further when looking at the number of guidelines that were present across the 19 high schools, the most common were constructs that required Teacher Responsibility and Teacher Feedback. This finding supports that the overall homework guidelines were predominately created and supported by the instructional staff. The principal of High School 12 began his interview by stating

“...based on the union contract I cannot force written homework guidelines because it is teacher’s discretion.” The contract language does state in Article VII Section A “Teachers shall have freedom in the implementation of the adopted curriculum, including the right to select materials and engage in classroom discussions as they relate to the subject matter being taught and the level of the student. The administrator has the right and obligation to question, consult, and direct whenever necessary” (Contract between The School Board of Orange County, Florida and the Orange County Classroom Teacher Association, 2015), but it does not limit the principal from recommending suggested guidelines to staff members as best practice. The principal of High School 14 expressly stated that the hope was “because the principal wanted them [the teachers] to have the autonomy to come together...and build the process to have autonomy to allow the teachers to push and go in directions unbound. The two examples illustrated that the homework guidelines that were established were driven more by the autonomy of the teachers, rather than the school principal.

The criteria of effective homework guidelines have matriculated from the simple desire to increase the amount of time students can spend in content acquisition and the development of positive study habits and routines (Murphy & Decker, 2001) to a more comprehensive desire to establish written policies that reinforce consistency, set reasonable time constraints both on the amount of time required as well as length of the assignment, to support the professional growth of teachers with regard to the development of appropriate assignments, and to the communication that is required for positive results (Craft, 2008). The need to set appropriate homework criteria and

guidelines recommended by a leadership team are supported by previous research. Even if the union contract limited the ability to write formal policy, it did not prohibit the school leadership team from setting appropriate and ethical standards in the best interest of the students' learning.

The professional growth aspect of Craft's (2008) study reinforced the premise that homework assignments should be thoughtfully planned out and speaks to the need for homework assignments to be assigned to students based on their capability of completing those tasks accurately as opposed to the mass presentation of the same material for each student. The responsibilities that were recorded for teachers centered on the need to provide feedback to students and outlined what percentage of the grade could be applied to the completion of homework. Only five schools expressed the expectation that teachers should note a student's competency level when assigning homework.

All 19 high schools involved in this study were on a seven period school day. There were no teams of teachers that existed in any of the high schools who supported the need to set guidelines for frequency, duration, and length of assignments. With no structure, teachers were able to assign whatever type of task they chose with no regard to the student's overall course load. Interview responses indicated that principals hoped teachers would take that into account but as the findings show, very few school principals or teachers set expectations for those guidelines. In fact, 14 of the 19 high schools (74%) spoke to the need for teachers to understand the course load of the students, especially in honors, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate course. However, only five

high schools had references in writing to any of the three guidelines contained in the Parameters and Constraints construct.

There were two topics brought out through the interviews that were not included in the recommended homework guidelines. However, due to the frequency of references it is important to note. Principals of 10 high schools referenced the need to set guidelines for overall percent of the final grade at their schools. The desire for students not to be inordinately punished for refusing or not being able to complete homework assignments was the identified reason for the noted guidelines.

Additionally, 13 principals discussed various social aspects that students encounter such as extracurricular activities, jobs, and even parenthood as conversation pieces needed with their staff when discussing the appropriateness of homework. Although there were no formal guidelines related to these issues, the principals of those 13 high schools stated it was important to remind teachers of the reality in which many students live.

Research Question 2: What is the process for establishing the school district homework guidelines and homework guidelines for each high school in one urban school district?

The procedures for creating homework guidelines consistent across the school district were nonexistent, as no formal guidelines or policies had been published. This is consistent with the findings as outlined in the literature review that the majority of school districts studied did not have school district-wide policies. This absence of policy left the

autonomy of setting any expectations through formal guidelines on the schools themselves.

There were no participants involved in formulating procedures for High School 4 and High School 16 who stated that they did not have any guidelines in place for homework. High School 7, High School 13, and High School 19 indicated that the homework guidelines were established prior to the principals' arrival and the principals were unaware of how the existing expectations were created. Of the remaining 14 high schools, 12 principals were actively engaged in the formation of homework guidelines. Additionally 10 high schools included at least one assistant principal in the process. All other participants were instructional employees. Administrative deans were included in five schools, instructional coaches were included in eight schools, and five principals brought in their department chairs or professional learning community leaders.

There were no principals who included input from students or parents. In contrast, the principal of High School 16, who did not have any guidelines, stated that if he were to define such expectations that he would include members from the student body as well as individuals from various parent organizations. Only the principal of High School 9 excluded input from other stakeholders and instead, relied on the principal's personal research. The principal of High School 11 allowed the process to be governed by an assistant principal. The principal of High School 14 turned the process over completely to the instructional staff.

Collaborative meetings among the participants took place in 13 of the 14 high schools, whose principals could identify the process that was utilized to create the

school's guidelines. Christen and Gomez (1987) suggested that homework planning committees should include parents as well as teachers and administrators. However, no school principal indicated the use of parents in setting homework guidelines. Hill, Spencer, Alston, and Fitzgerald (2001) stated that more attention should be placed on the development of homework guidelines and policies in school. The number of individuals that were included in the development of homework guidelines in the North Carolina school district were finite and utilized only administrators and instructional leaders (Spencer, Alston, & Fitzgerald, 2001). At no time was there in an indication that every instructor had the opportunity to provide input, nor were parent and student input sought. The American Teacher (2007) supports the need to have a more productive approach involving students' parents, and teachers. The findings support the need for increased involvement of student and parent organizations within a school and when developing homework guidelines.

The collaborative meetings that took place at the 14 identified high schools were not given defined goals or directions except for High School 15. The principal of High School 15 set the goal to define the percentage of a student's grade that was dependent on the completion of homework assignments. Providing clear direction and expectations of which research based homework guidelines should be addressed would benefit both teachers and students.

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between school homework guidelines and the school district homework guidelines?

The findings were clear that no homework guidelines were established by the school district, nor did a school board policy exist. For this reason there was no relationship between the two bodies. Autonomy was passed to the school principals to set homework guidelines deemed necessary by the principal to implement and monitor. Cooper (2001) stated that school districts, individual schools and teachers would all benefit from aligning their homework guidelines. Pasi (2006) went on to follow up by saying that homework guidelines should be clear and follow policies and practices that were logical to all stakeholder. The document review and research in this study clearly supported this previous research. The range of scores (9), was an indication that there was no school district oversight that provided any direction for the high schools to follow. For this reason, high schools scored between 1 and 10 points on the 12 point scale.

If high schools were provided direction from the school district on setting expectations, the range of points would diminish and would allow for more consistency across the 19 high schools. It was not necessary for the school district to enact formal school board policy that would have required ratification between the school district and the established union; however, by suggesting the recommended guideline structure each school could have adjust their expectations based on the input of all stakeholders.

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between homework guidelines for individual high schools and student achievement as measured by the 2014-2015 high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for

reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores and reading mathematics.

A Pearson r correlation was calculated for each of the four constructs and each of the student achievement metrics. The findings were clear that no statistically significant relationship existed between the overall matrix score and the five student achievement metrics. The guidelines were grouped into four constructs; Structure, Parameters and Constraints, Responsibilities, and Outputs. In not one instance was there a significant relationship established. It is important to note as well that the four schools that scored the lowest on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix collectively showed higher results on each of the five student achievement metrics. An explanation for this could include the notion that students in higher achieving schools did not need as many homework guidelines enforced as they could be self-motivated or intrinsically motivated.

Because there is no statistical significance showing the relationship between meeting the homework criteria and student achievement for the metrics in this study does not mean that the criteria is unimportant. In the schools with more criteria there could be unmeasured impacts supporting student learning.

Implications for Practice

The instructional practice of assigning homework has been utilized for years. The debate of whether it is an effective instructional strategy has persisted right along with it. It has been purported that two ways to increase student achievement results is to increase

the amount of content students are introduced to and to lengthen the time spent on academic work. The purpose of homework was to fulfill these two strategies.

Principals from the 19 high schools were able to articulate their personal beliefs about homework practices as well as what they believed best practices included with regard to homework assignments. There was a gap however, between their personal philosophy and the existing homework guidelines in their schools. An overall lack of importance was placed on the homework guidelines at the schools. Three principals stated that they did not monitor homework guidelines, rather they relied on student or parent complaints about a particular teacher that would prompt in individual investigation, but nothing school wide. Three other principals clearly stated that the workload of monitoring such a thing was simply too much.

The findings of this study have multiple implications for the school district, administrators and teachers. The findings should give school district personnel, school principals, and teacher's suggestions on guidelines that could be structured to maximize the use of homework. Other implications for school districts is to include the oversight of established guidelines, a monitoring structure for homework guideline implementation, the process by which homework guidelines are established, and the professional development necessary to create effective homework assignments. It is important to note that these implications do not simply apply to this urban school district. The findings and implications can be applied to all high schools in any geographic location.

Implication 1

The first implication that a more structured set of homework guidelines be implemented is supported by the data taken from the research questions 1 and 3. It was noted that there were no school district wide guidelines in place or even suggested to the 19 high schools. The autonomy fell squarely on the schools themselves. Based on the lack of effective monitoring processes in place and the fact that 11 of the 19 (58%) scored half or fewer points on the matrix, more attention needed to be placed on the homework structures. Most notably, the guidelines that included frequency, duration, length, student responsibility, and capability were present in less than half of the 19 high schools. With 14 of the 19 high school principals describing the need to articulate to their instructional staff that they needed to take into consideration the fact that students were taking seven courses, at an honors level or above. The work load required after the traditional school day could easily become overrun with additional evening work. Thirteen principals also referenced the social needs of the students, the demands of everyday life, or extracurricular activities as determining factors for teachers when deciding how much work to assign after school. The gap that exists was reflected by the fact that 68% or more of the high school principals noted these demands, but only 16% of the schools set guidelines for the time spent on an assignment or the length of the assignment itself. Slightly higher, 32% of the high schools had expectations with regard to the frequency that homework should be assigned.

Given that high school principals, to a large degree, recognize the limitations students have after school hours, then an implication is to recommend to their staff

guidelines related to the frequency, time, and length required of each assignment. This does not require a school policy; however, publishing recommended guidelines in all documents would help set a more consistent tone and support student learning. Principals indicated that monitoring these guidelines is cumbersome, it becomes exacerbated when there are inconsistent expectations through a school building. Only five schools referenced assignments that should be administered based on a student's ability. Practice, a common use of homework, should be assigned after a student has mastered a standard or skill. When students practice a standard or skill inaccurately, the gap in content acquisition widens even further.

Feedback was an important guideline established by the document review and interview process. Principals established the expectation that feedback should be given to students upon completion of a homework assignment in 63% of the high schools. When probed about what type of feedback should be required, answers were inconsistent. All of the principals noted that teachers had the option to grade for completion versus grade for accuracy. This indicates the need for clear direction from the school leadership. The grade that goes into the gradebook can easily be determined by the instructor, but there should be expectations set as to what feedback the student receives. A check for completion does not in any way report to a student if they have acquired mastery of a skill or if they are even making progress toward mastery.

Higher frequency of schools, High Schools 14 and 11 respectively, held expectations for teacher and administrator responsibilities. Teachers, holding the autonomy as they do across the 19 high schools, requires administrators to respond when

students or parents complain about homework assignments or homework workloads. It is logical that these two guidelines would score in close relation with one another. The responsibility of the administration is to expand beyond simply making inquiries when there are issues, to helping teachers design more effective, relevant, and appropriate homework assignments. As PLCs are used to write common summative assessments, homework may be viewed as formative assessments and be given just as much attention. This expectation will place a much different set of responsibilities on the teacher and administration that would have a higher probability of impacting student achievement results.

Overall, there were inconsistencies found in which guidelines were evident and the specific considerations of the homework guidelines that were addressed. The autonomy, first turned over to the school, lands in the teacher's classroom. With different techniques, different structures, and different content areas, homework guidelines should be reviewed for overall effectiveness across the school, and then turned over to the school district to communicate with all stakeholders.

Implication 2

The second implication concerns the lack of oversight by the school district. The findings of the document review in research question 1 indicated that there are no regulations in place. It is recommended that the school level guidelines and expectations be given direction by the school district if consistency is going to be obtained. The findings show a resulting range on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix of nine

points. This range is extremely high when considering the total points one school could achieve was 12. It is possible to allow teachers autonomy in their own classrooms while still suggesting and recommending best practices or setting parameters within which individual teachers have flexibility.

It is recommended that principals work with their stakeholders to establish guidelines for their individual school. Subsequently it would be a good idea to meet as a consortium of principals and develop the overall high school homework guidelines.

Implication 3

The third implication, that schools need to revisit the homework guidelines that were in place, was derived from the data gathered from the principals interviews. The existing guidelines that had been established at the high schools were mostly accomplished through collaborative meetings, 81% of the high schools utilized this method. Of the remaining high schools two had no procedures, three did not know how the guidelines were established, and one was written by the principal upon arrival at the schools. Of the 19 high schools, only the principal of High School 19 indicated that he consistently reviewed all of their policies and procedures each year, including homework guidelines. The principal of High School 7 described a plan to revisit the conversation about high school homework guidelines in the future. The remaining 17 schools did not indicate a desire nor plan to review the homework guidelines.

The practice of assigning homework was established at some point and had not been revised in these schools. This finding supports the fact that the autonomy of

homework practice implementation rests primarily with the instructional staff. It is recommended that principals not only set appropriate research based guidelines for homework, but monitor and revisit the implementation on a yearly basis. If this were accomplished by involving all of the stakeholders, and they have active voices in the process to revise each year, consistency and buy-in can eventually be obtained. This would assist the administration with the monitoring task as they would know exactly what they were monitoring. If done correctly, homework could yield higher effect sizes with regard to content acquisition by extending the school day, and allowing for a greater amount of content to be administered during the traditional school day where the students have the appropriate scaffolding and support.

Implication 4

The fourth implication is an extension of implication three. As there is a need to revisit, revise, and implement homework guidelines consistently, so too is the importance of involving multiple stakeholders. Data from research question 2 shows that 13 of the 14 high schools with known established procedures for developing homework guidelines utilized administrators, either in the form of the principal, assistant principal or both. Thirteen schools also utilized the expertise and opinions of instructional staff members in the form of deans, instructional coaches, department chairs, or PLC leaders. There were no schools that utilized individuals from all of these groups. Also of note, not one school spoke with students or parents when developing their homework procedures. With the data reported in research question one through the interview process, there is an

understanding that students have multiple factors outside of the traditional school day that either asset or hinder the ability to complete homework assignments. If 68% or more of the principals could speak to the social needs as well as the intense course loads students are taking, it would be beneficial to included representatives from these two groups when establishing homework guidelines. Homework is not meant to be punitive, nor should it hinder a student's growth, rather the implementation is designed to be an aid. If students cannot actively relay the reality in their communities, then homework can become just that, a hindrance and a punishment.

Collaborative meetings should take place with all stakeholders to not only establish homework guidelines, but to monitor their implementation and usefulness on an on-going basis. These stakeholders should include but are not limited to the administration, instructional staff, parents, and students in order to create the most comprehensive set of guidelines.

Implication 5

The fifth implication of this study was that administrators and instructors need to be provided professional development on effective homework development and practices. Not only do the guidelines need to be in place, but the development of the student work expectations should be taken into consideration. Administrators need to work with teachers as to what appropriate practice assignments are as well as how to develop enrichment projects that adhere to the recommended guidelines. Homework should be deliberate in nature and differentiated to students based on their capability to complete

the assignment with limited resources or assistance when not with their teacher. Homework should not be the residual work assigned because time ran out in a class period. The planning and development of homework assignments should be just as methodical as a daily lesson. If homework is to truly become an extension of the classroom then attention should be paid to the best guidelines to follow when assigning it.

Implication 6

The sixth implication derived from the finding of this study is that student achievement results as defined by high school graduation rates as well as ACT and SAT reading and math results are not necessarily dependent on standardized homework guidelines. The fact that, collectively, the four schools with more defined guidelines scored on average lower than the four schools with few guidelines on the student achievement metrics is notable. The need for more clearly defined homework guidelines are necessary in schools whose students may struggle as opposed to higher performing schools. The ability to self-regulate responsibilities could have a larger impact than the simple structure that could be in place.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to evaluate homework guidelines according to criteria identified in the literature review. The data were also used to determine the relationship, if any, between homework guidelines and student achievement results as measured by high school graduation rates, American College Test (ACT) scores for

reading and mathematics, and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores for reading and mathematics for high schools in one urban school district. The quality of guidelines that existed was not taken into consideration for this study, merely that the guideline was in place. There are a number of opportunities to further as well as enhance this study.

1. The first recommendation for further research would begin by finding a comparable school district that has school district wide homework guidelines in place. As the school district in this study did not, it would be of interest to see if there was a smaller range in matrix scorings, as well as if there was a consistency that existed between the school district and the schools. Further, this study looked at ten different guidelines divided into four groups. Future research could benefit by isolating each of the 10 guidelines as well as the groups for more individual and intense examination.
2. Research on the impact of how homework is graded is important. There were 10 principals who referenced the percentage of a student's overall grade that is reliant on homework. There was no research done in this study that examined at the impact of grading, nor the percentage assigned to the overall grade. Research in this area could bring to light if there is a relationship that may exist between teachers who grade homework for completion versus accuracy as it relates to student achievement metrics. Beyond that there could exist a possible relationship with the percentage impact on a students' grade as it relates to student achievement metrics as well.

3. Examine the social impacts in the lives of students for each school to determine the relationship of such impacts on efficacy of homework as a learning tool. Through the interview process, social aspects that effect students was referenced. Previous research has been conducted on the social impacts of homework as well by individuals such as Cooper and Valentine (2001), however it would be of interest to set an index score to social impacts for the 19 high schools in this study and compare that to the number of points that were acquired on the Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix. Research could be done to see if there exists a correlation between social impacts and the number of guidelines that are present, and the level to which they are monitored and maintained.
4. Based on the data from research question 4 further study should be conducted pertaining to the overall achievement levels of schools. This study looked at homework as a function of existing guidelines and possible impacts that may exist. Isolating schools based on comparable achievement results first and then looking at established homework guidelines that may exist could serve to determine if there is a significant positive effect on student achievement results.
5. This urban school district has been moving toward one-to-one digital instruction. During the 2016-2017 school year all high schools students in this urban school district will have their own digital device provided by the school district. The availability the students will have to digital devices may

have an impact on the amount of homework students will complete as well as the immediate feedback teachers will be able to provide. Further research should include school districts that have moved to one-to-one devices as well as those that have not.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reinforce the referenced research indicating a lack of consistent homework guidelines found on a school wide level as well as a lack of homework expectations on a school district level. The homework guidelines that did exist were of little value when attempting to determine if there were significant relationships with student achievement metrics. The need to further identify not just the guidelines that could increase the return on homework investment, but to find the consistency and oversight needed to produce positive correlations is paramount. Without a clear direction from a school district level, schools struggle to establish homework criteria that would support its continued use. Instead the responsibility falls upon the classroom instructor which exacerbates the level of inconsistency witnessed with regard to homework guidelines on the high school level.

APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To: James Larsen
Date: April 13, 2016

Dear Researcher:

On 04/13/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: An Analysis of High School Homework Guidelines in one Urban School District
Investigator: James Larsen
IRB Number: SBE-16-12174
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 04/13/2016 10:41:58 AM EDT

IRB Manager

APPENDIX B
LARGE URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH



Orange County Public Schools

445 West Avella Street • Orlando, FL 32801-1129 • Phone 407 317 3200 • www.ocps.net

Notice of Approval

Approval Date: 5/26/16

Approval Number: **0043**

Project Title: *An Analysis of High School Homework Guidelines in one Urban School District*

Requester: James Larsen

Project Director/Advisor: Rosemary Taylor

Sponsor Agency/Institutional Affiliation: University of Central Florida

Thank you for your request to conduct research in Orange County Public Schools. We have reviewed and approved your application. This Notice of Approval expires one year after issue, 5/25/17 .

If you are interacting with OCPS staff or students, you should have submitted a Principal Notification Form with your application. You may now email the principals who have indicated interest in participating, including this Notice as an attachment. After initial contact with principals, you may then email any necessary staff. This notice does not obligate administrators, teachers, students, or families of students to participate in your study; participation is entirely voluntary.

OCPS badges are required to enter any OCPS campus or building (see the [Security Clearance Flow Chart](#)).

You are responsible for submitting a [Change Request Form](#) to this office prior to implementing any changes to the currently approved protocol. If any problems or unexpected adverse reactions occur as a result of this study, you must notify this office immediately by emailing a completed [Adverse Event Report Form](#). On or before 4/25/17 , you must complete a [Request for Renewal or Executive Summary Submission](#). Email all forms to research@ocps.net. All forms may be found at www.ocps.net/cs/services/accountability/Pages/Research.aspx.

Should you have questions or need assistance, please contact Mary Ann White at (407) 317-3201 or mary.white@ocps.net.

Best wishes for continued success,

Tavy Chen, Ed.D.
tavy.chen@ocps.net
Director of Accountability, Research and Evaluation
Orange County Public Schools

"The Orange County School Board is an equal opportunity agency."

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions:

1. Do you have written homework guidelines?
Probe: Please share with me.
2. Please identify the major components of your homework guidelines.
Probe: If needed, ask about each criterion in the matrix.
3. Who was involved in creating the school's homework policy?
4. What was the process that was followed to create the school's homework guidelines?
5. What are the parameters and constraints included in your homework guidelines?
6. How are homework guideline implementation monitored?
Probe: Who is responsible for the monitoring in your school?

7. Are there time limits for individual classes as to how long students should be required to work on assignments outside the traditional school day?
Probe: If yes, please describe.

8. What are the various types of homework assignments you find to be prevalent in your school?
Probe: Approximately what is the percentage of each type of assignment?

9. What is the policy of practice on how teachers respond to homework assignments?

10. Please tell me your homework philosophy or beliefs.

11. I am wondering; how is the homework practice adjusted for students of various levels of achievement? (i.e. Advanced Placement vs Specific Learning Disabled)

12. Is there anything else you would like me as a researcher to include about homework guidelines and practice?

Notes:

APPENDIX D
HOMEWORK GUIDELINE CRITERIA MATRIX

Criteria					
Participant	Structure		Parameters and Constraints		
	Policy (2)	Philosophy (2)	Frequency (1)	Duration (1)	Length (1)
High School 1					
High School 2					
High School 3					
High School 4					
High School 5					
High School 6					
High School 7					
High School 8					
High School 9					
High School 10					

Note. Total Possible Points: 7

Code	Source
D	Document
I	Interview
PH	Parent Handbook
SH	Student Handbook
W	Website
X	No Data

Criteria	Points Possible
Policy	2
Philosophy	2
Frequency	1
Duration	1
Length	1

Criteria					
Participant	Structure		Parameters and Constraints		
	Policy (2)	Philosophy (2)	Frequency (1)	Duration (1)	Length (1)
High School 11					
High School 12					
High School 13					
High School 14					
High School 15					
High School 16					
High School 17					
High School 18					
High School 19					
School District					

Note. Total Possible Points: 7

Code	Source
D	Document
I	Interview
PH	Parent Handbook
SH	Student Handbook
W	Website
X	No Data

Criteria	Points Possible
Policy	2
Philosophy	2
Frequency	1
Duration	1
Length	1

Criteria					
Participant	Responsibility			Outcome	
	Student R (1)	Teacher R (1)	Admin R (1)	Capability (1)	Feedback (1)
High School 1					
High School 2					
High School 3					
High School 4					
High School 5					
High School 6					
High School 7					
High School 8					
High School 9					
High School 10					

Note. Total Possible Points: 5

Code	Source
D	Document
I	Interview
PH	Parent Handbook
SH	Student Handbook
W	Website
X	No Data

Criteria	Points Possible
Student Responsibility	1
Teacher Responsibility	1
Administrator Responsibility	1
Capability	1
Feedback	1

Criteria					
Participant	Responsibility			Outcome	
	Student R (1)	Teacher R (1)	Admin R (1)	Capability (1)	Feedback (1)
High School 11					
High School 12					
High School 13					
High School 14					
High School 15					
High School 16					
High School 17					
High School 18					
High School 19					
School District					

Note. Total Possible Points: 5

Code	Source
D	Document
I	Interview
PH	Parent Handbook
SH	Student Handbook
W	Website
X	No Data

Criteria	Points Possible
Student Responsibility	1
Teacher Responsibility	1
Administrator Responsibility	1
Capability	1
Feedback	1

APPENDIX E
COMPLETED HOMEWORK GUIDELINE CRITERA MATRIX

Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix

Criteria					
Participant	Structure		Parameters and Constraints		
	Policy (2)	Philosophy (2)	Frequency (1)	Duration (1)	Length (1)
High School 1	FH/W (2)	FH/W (2)	I (1)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 2	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 3	CG/FH (2)	FH/I (2)	CG (1)	X (0)	I (1)
High School 4	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 5	CG (2)	I (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 6	FH (2)	X (0)	FH (1)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 7	FH (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 8	FH (2)	I (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 9	FH (2)	I (2)	X (0)	I (1)	X (0)
High School 10	FH (2)	FH (2)	X (0)	I (1)	X (0)
High School 11	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 12	FH (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 13	FH (2)	FH (2)	FH (1)	I (1)	X (0)
High School 14	FH (2)	FH (2)	FH (1)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 15	FH (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 16	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 17	FH (2)	FH (2)	X (0)	X (0)	I (1)
High School 18	FH (2)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 19	FH (2)	FH (2)	FH (1)	X (0)	SH (1)
School District	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)

Total Possible Points: 12

Homework Guideline Criteria Matrix

Criteria					
Participant	Responsibility			Outcome	
	Student R (1)	Teacher R (1)	Admin R (1)	Capability (1)	Feedback (1)
High School 1	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	W/FH (1)
High School 2	X (0)	I (1)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 3	CG (1)	I (1)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
High School 4	SH (1)	I (1)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 5	CG (1)	I (1)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 6	X (0)	FH (1)	I (1)	X (0)	I (1)
High School 7	X (0)	FH (1)	I (1)	FH (1)	X (0)
High School 8	X (0)	FH/I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)	I (1)
High School 9	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	FH/I (1)
High School 10	X (0)	X (0)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
High School 11	X (0)	I (1)	I (1)	X (0)	I (1)
High School 12	X (0)	X (0)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
High School 13	FH (1)	FH (1)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
High School 14	X (0)	X (0)	I (1)	FH (1)	X (0)
High School 15	X (0)	I (1)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
High School 16	I (1)	I (1)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)
High School 17	X (0)	I (1)	I (1)	FH (1)	X (0)
High School 18	FH (1)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)	I (1)
High School 19	FH (1)	FH (1)	I (1)	X (0)	FH (1)
School District	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)	X (0)

Total Possible Points: 12

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