IMPROVING HOMEWORK COMPLETION OF STUDENTS THROUGH TUTORED STUDY HALL

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ABSTRACT

This action research project was designed to improve homework completion by providing a tutored study hall. Four classroom teachers conducted the research. The student groups consisted of 45 middle school students and two high school students. At Site A, five teachers participated in gathering data prior to and during the study hall. At Site B, 14 teachers participated in gathering data prior to and during study hall. Prior to the intervention, parents and students completed a pre-survey of six questions.

The changing of family dynamics has caused the time needed, and the time available, to complete homework to come into conflict. The numbers of single-parent households, non-traditional households, and non-English speaking parents have increased dramatically, making it difficult for students to find the needed support at home. Research has shown that homework is the number one cause of stress in the home.

The targeted students exhibited a lack of homework completion, which negatively affected their academic success. Solution strategies suggested by a review of the literature, combined with observations and pre-surveys, resulted in a homework management intervention. Teacher researchers created data-gathering surveys and reflection tools.

After the inception of a tutored study hall, it was found that homework completion rates both increased and decreased. Site A discovered that the homework completion rate changed from 92% to 96% of homework being completed. At Site B, the results showed a drop in homework completion rates from 100% to 97% of homework being completed.

CHAPTER ONE
PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Homework completion is an issue that affects many classrooms and the achievement of many students. Teachers experience frustration due to the lack of homework completion and students are at a disadvantage due to the lack of knowledge and practice that the homework provides. Homework, which is an essential piece to the educational curriculum, is also one of the biggest frustrations of students, teachers, and parents when it is not completed.

Many researchers and educational practitioners have done studies to determine why homework is not completed. The studies have centered in two areas, the causes of homework incompletion and possible solutions to the problem. Our action research was conducted in two categories: implementing one of the researched interventions and the assessment of that implemented intervention.

As a collaborative of teachers in a middle school without a scheduled daily study hall, we believed that a solution to the problem of homework non-completion would be to offer a voluntary after-school study hall. To provide a broader spectrum of data to support our belief, the high school mathematics lab coordinator systematically tracked a scheduled high school study hall. During study hall time, students could process their homework and get their questions answered. We hoped that this would increase student understanding and the completion rate of homework across all subjects. In addition, we hoped that a positive experience gained from homework completion--the lessening of school tensions, student and parental strife, and successful grades--would build an intrinsic motivation for students to complete homework. Our research was completed at

two schools. The members of the first target group were seventh grade students of three core teachers. Site A target group for this research was 129 regular education students. The second set of data came from those students who voluntarily went to the Site B Math Lab. The Math Lab is a teacher-directed study hall aimed to assist students at any level with their difficulties in mathematics. Data were collected via surveys to the parents, students, and teachers, qualitative documentation of study hall and regular classroom behavior, academic quantitative research, and student interviews.

We believed that homework completion in our classes was a serious issue. Students without completed homework came with a lack of knowledge for classroom discussions. In reading, without having read the assigned nightly chapter, students did not have anything to add to, nor fully participate in, the discussion. In mathematics, students continually need to build on their prior knowledge to understand new mathematics topics. Without understanding one night's homework, they did not have the tools needed to understand a new lesson.

Homework completion increases the practice that students require in order to master basic skills and critical thinking. Students must continually practice their skills and new procedures in order to apply these skills more accurately when tested.

Problem Statement

Some students in the researchers' middle school and in the high school had issues with homework completion that impeded their academic growth. Evidence of this problem came from the lack of homework completion, not fully understanding concepts, or lack of concern over not having completed a required assignment. The problem became even more apparent with the chronic failures in high school, which could lead to failure to

graduate. By implementing a study hall during the school day, the researchers' hoped to increase homework completion.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A:

This middle school houses 437 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who are supported by 36 faculty and staff members. Situated on the northeast side of a 67-acre campus, the school shares the site with a primary and an elementary school, both part of the total district. Through the years of 1989 to 2000, the student population was stable at around 500. From 2000 through 2007, the population grew to 1,501, a 175% increase. The ethnic makeup of the district has been changing dramatically over the past six years as the population grows. Predominately Caucasian, there are currently 24 countries represented by the student body in the 7th grade.

Site B:

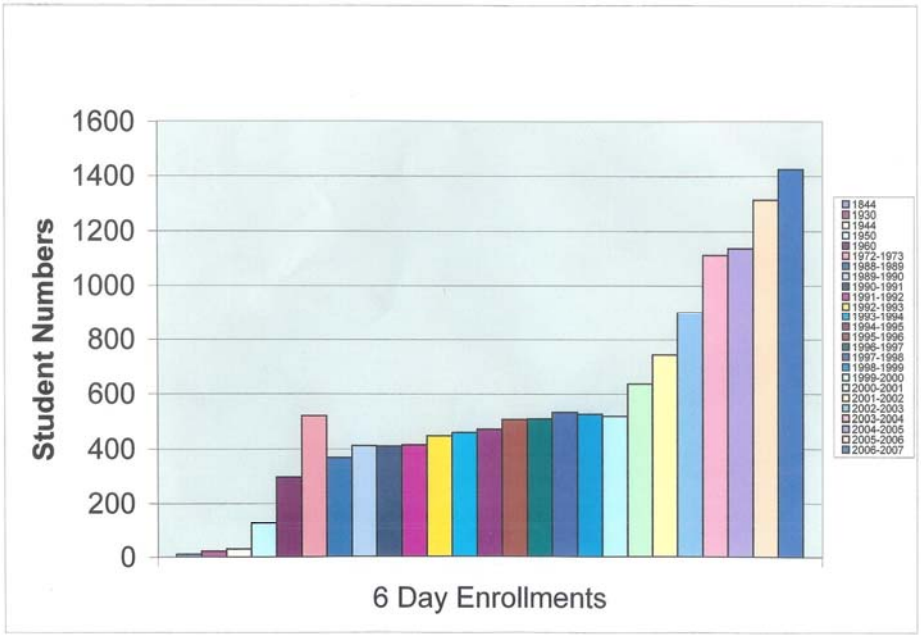
Site B high school began in 1930. Its feeder schools (more than 20 total, including Site A) lie within a 30 square mile area, including four different villages. There are currently 1,700 students at Site B. This number is expected to rise by 400 within the next four years. After recent renovations, it rests on 42 acres and houses over 100 faculty and staff members.

The Surrounding Community

The community around the schools has greatly diversified within the last seven years. According to the student enrollment figures in the district offices, from 1972 to 2000 there was little to no growth or a change in the ethnic community. From 2000 to 2006, there was an increase of about 900 students at the middle school level. There are

currently 450 students in the middle school and about 1,700 students at the high school level, an increase of about 175% in the course of six years. The following chart illustrates student attendance in the entire district of Site A, starting in the first year of 1844 and continuing through 2007, which further illustrates the dramatic growth the community has been experiencing.

Site A:



Population:

Total population: 10,018
Population density: 883.7
Median age: 35.5

Ethnic Characteristics:

Caucasian: 97.92%
African American: 0.88%

Asian American: 0.31%
American Indian: 0.23%
Hispanic: 1.74%

Socio-Economic Factors:

Unemployment rate: 4.3%
Future job growth: 25.85%
Household income: $62,890
Income per capita: $25,972
Educational expenditure per pupil: $4,601

Housing Costs:

Median home cost: $197,500
Home appreciation: 15.16%
Property Tax Rate: $19.39

Religious Considerations:

Catholic: 39.26%
Protestant: 9.64%
Other Christian: 5.55%
Jewish: 3.88%
Eastern: 0.05%
Islam: 0.42%

Political Affiliation:

Democrat: 48.8%
Republican: 50.5%

Student racial ethnic composition:

White/Caucasian: 75.2%
African American: 4.7%
Latin American: 14.2%
Native American: 2%
Other categories: 3.9%

Enrollment information:

Total enrollment: 392
Male: 204
Female: 188
White/Caucasian: 295

African American: 18
Latin American: 56
Asian/Pacific Islander: 15
Native American: 8
Multiracial/Other: 0

Staff by category:

Core subject teachers: 15
Physical education: 3
Specials teachers: 3
Special education teachers: 6
Recess/lunch supervisors: 4
Office staff: 3
District/Administrators: 2
Support staff: 7
Technical support: 1
Bus Services: Out-serviced program

Other staff information:

Average years of experience/core staff: 6.4
Educational levels attained (and percent of staff):
Bachelors: 100%
Masters: 37%
Doctorates: 0

Other information:

Average class size: 25.2
Student-to-certified staff ratio: 16.8
Student-to-administrator ratio: 392:1---6th, 7th and 8th

Target group demographics includes only the members of the 7th grade

Student racial ethnic

White/Caucasian 78.2%
African American 4.0%
Latin American 12.7%
Native American 3.2%
Other categories 0%

Enrollment information:

Total enrollment: 129
Male: 74
Female: 55
White/Caucasian: 102
African American: 10
Latin American: 16
Asian/Pacific Islander: 5
Native American: 1
Multiracial/Other: 0
LEP: 1
Students with disabilities: 22
Economically disadvantaged: 9

Student performance on the following tests:

State Achievement Test (School) 72.9%
State Achievement Test (7^{th} grade science) 84.6%
State Achievement Test (7^{th} grade reading) 81.1%
State Achievement Test (7^{th} grade mathematics) 53.5%

Staff Demographics:

White Caucasian 100%
Other ethnicities 0%
Male 11%
Female 89%
Average teacher salary $44,430
Average administrator salary $91,755

Staff by category:

Seventh grade staff: core subject teachers: 5
Physical Education: 2
Specials teachers: 0
Special education teachers: 3
Recess/lunch supervisors: 2
Office staff: 2
Administrators: 1
Support staff: 7
Technical support: 1
Bus services: Out-serviced program

Site B:

Student racial ethnic composition:

White/Caucasian: 80.7%
African American: 2.5%
Latin American: 11.9%
Native American: 0.3%
Other categories: 4.5%

Enrollment information:

Total enrollment: 1,578
White/Caucasian: 1,273
African American: 40
Latin American: 188
Asian/Pacific Islander: 31
Native American: 5
Multiracial/Other: 41

Staff by category:

Core subject teachers: 70
Physical Education: 11
Specials teachers: 10
Special education teachers: 20
Deans/counselors: 7
Office staff: 8
District/administrators: 6
Other support staff: 11
Kitchen/maintenance: 4

Other staff information:

Average years of experience/core staff: 9.7
Percent of teachers with provisional credentials: 3.5%
Average teacher salary: $63,398
Percent of teachers with Graduate degrees: 59.3%

PSAE Results: [state high school testing]
Reading: 62.6%
Mathematics: 56.6%
Science: 53.6%
AYP goals met: Yes

Other information:

Average class size: 20.0
Low income: 10.7%
Limited English proficiency: 1.0%
Mobility: 11.5%

At Site A, the special education department offered two different types of special support. REI (Regular Education Initiative) support was provided within each core class: the special education support person attended class to offer one-on-one instruction and to provide modifications as stated in the Individual Education Plan. These classes were directed by regular education teachers and were modified to accommodate the learning styles of these students. The second type of special education class at Site A was a "pull-out" program that provided a modified curriculum, with more one-on-one assistance and a slower pace. Additionally, the Cross Categorical Inclusion Program students that were previously out-sourced were now serviced in-district.

Extra curricular activities offered at this school included boys' basketball, cheerleading, girls' basketball, girls' volleyball, wrestling, cross-country, and track. Clubs included Student Council and yearbook.

At Site B, there were a variety of special education adaptations and departments, ranging from one-on-one pullout classes to limited accommodations inside the classrooms, dependent on the students' needs. There were more than 70 clubs, organizations, and after-school activities.

National Context of the Problem

Homework is defined as "lessons to be studied or schoolwork to be done outside the classroom" (Gill, 2004 p.174). Grade level has a striking influence on the effectiveness of homework. Studies indicate that high school students who attended a homework class

out-performed 69% of their peers who attended a non-homework class, while junior high students that attended a homework class only out-performed those not doing homework 35% of the time (Epstein & Voorhis 2001).

Today, the average American 13-year-old spends about one hour daily doing homework, which is considered to be the number one stress-causing agent within the family (Simplicio 2005). A RAND study, determined that the typical American high school student spends only about five hours a week on homework. A Brookings Institution review of several studies on the homework levels of the top 20 industrialized countries shows that students in the U.S. rank near the bottom when considering the amount of homework done on a daily basis (Cooper 2000).

> Saddled with an out-of-school curriculum chock-full of Taekwondo [sic] lessons, ceramics workshops and bassoon practice, America's youngsters barely have time to check their e-mail before hunkering down with homework. On the whole, U.S. students come home with more schoolwork than ever before--and at a younger age. According to researchers at the University of Michigan, 6-to-9-year-olds in 1981 spent 44 minutes a week on homework; in 1997 they did more than two hours [sic] worth. The amount of time that 9-to-11-year-olds devoted to homework each week increased from 2 hours 49 minutes to more than 3 1/2 hours (Romesh, 1999).

Reflections of the Research Team

1. What were we doing in the name of action research?

Action research is the implementation of constant questioning of teaching methods and how to improve them in a cyclical manner. Identification of a problem leads to trying a new approach. The constant modification of methods accommodates the learners. Our project was about attacking the problem of a lack of study hall in our students' daily schedule, and we believed that having one is important to the students' success. Within our implementation, we researched the topic and constructed a question to be answered. We were using qualitative and quantitative data to analyze our new program, via surveys, grades, input, interviews, and growth trends.

2. Why were we doing it? What relevance did it hold for us? Why was it important?

As teachers, we continually saw signs of growing academic failure, both in grades and in understanding. It was our hope that seeing the completion of homework would improve student understanding, achievement, grades, and create a more positive learning environment.

3. What questions did we have about the process?

As we came together, we discussed key questions that we used to structure our reflections. The following questions fed into the creation of the surveys.

Would this positively affect our students?

Would there be a lack of attendance in the study hall?

Would this be received positively by the student population?

Would the parents support this?

Would this help develop independent study skills?

4. What were the advantages of engaging in collaborative research?

As a team of teachers, we had a thorough advantage over many other groups, since we were able to gather research from three different perspectives over the same student population. Each of us measured success differently in our classes (whether mathematics, science, social studies, or reading). Since three of us had the same student population, we expected more definitive outcomes for those students. Instead of measuring their success in only a few ways, we were able to measure it categorically in many ways. We also had the advantage of being able to collaborate and discuss constantly because of our proximity and respect for each others' talents and opinions.

5. How did we measure the success of our research project?

We hoped that by implementing an after-school study hall and providing necessary support, students would find the environment inviting and find the study hall an enjoyable after-school activity. By gaining positive feedback, we further hoped that all students participating in this research would realize intrinsic value in homework completion.

Teacher Researcher Reflection Statements:

Teacher 1, Site A: I gave a weekly homework assignment in order to enrich previously learned reading skills. The students tended to think this short assignment was silly and often forgot to do it since it was handed out at the beginning of the week and due at the end of the week. I was hoping that with a study hall provided, more students would start turning in these weekly assignments. My initial reasoning for assigning these worksheets was in hopes of touching upon those reading skills I did not get to with every story or novel. My hopes were also that with the students practicing these skills

throughout the year, they would be fairly familiar with these skills if they were on the state tests, thus possibly raising their reading scores. This district has typically not scored well on the reading sections of the state assessment tests. My hope was that requiring students to complete skill-builders, scores would rise, convincing the administration that providing time for a study hall was a good idea.

Teacher 2, Site A: In science, the focus is on problem-solving and learning how to conduct experiments and analyze the outcomes. Because this skill was so new to this age group, I did not assign much homework. I preferred to work closely with students in the lab. I found that often the scientific discovery negates something told to them by a parent and I needed to be there to explain why. Sending home an assignment that might not have a definite outcome can be confusing if the student seeks parental help. However, I had expected students to study at home for tests. I saw the lack of test preparation from my classes. I did not weigh activity categories differently: homework worth so much, tests worth so much, etc.; and sometimes students understood that one category would not cause failure if other categories were done well, so a student would not bother to study. Because scientific inquiry is so exciting, students want to do well in the lab. Tests are not so interesting, and they find no intrinsic value in studying. I was hoping to change that by understanding what students need in order to help students find homework valuable. To understand that, I needed to conduct this research so that I could understand the challenges students face when trying to do homework, attitudes about homework and re-define why and how I assign homework. By reviewing the data that had been collected during the study hall, I hoped to further my understanding and use this knowledge to provide more effective instruction.

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Teacher 3, Site A: As a social studies teacher, I have found that the text in a social studies book can be confusing. Students have often had difficulty recognizing important information within a section. Because of this, most sections within a chapter were read together as a class. During that time, I pointed out and reiterated the main points. I also tried to explain the larger connections of the time-period so that they could see the cause and effect of events in history. After we had read a specific section, the homework that I assigned required them to go back into the text to pick out the major points. This was intended to not only help them practice sifting through wordy sections to find what they needed within a book, but also to help them retain some of the information that was necessary to understand the larger issues that were being discussed. I had found that many students did not finish their homework completely or the quality of their homework was very poor. I was not certain if that happened because the students were unable to find the essential information within the text or if they found little value in the homework because they did not understand its importance. I was hoping that this research would help me to find the answer to this so I could adjust accordingly.

Teacher 4, Site B: As a mathematics teacher, I find giving homework to be a very practical method to practice the rote skills of mathematics and to explore extensions of mathematical applications. Homework is a time to practice skills and to realize the applications of mathematical strategies. I hoped that the study hall would provide the time that students need that they may not have at home. Many students went home to parents who were unable to provide help in the ever-changing mathematical curriculum. I

had hoped to see this study hall as a tool to boost the students' math abilities, increase their homework completion, and possibly as a way to increase state test scores.

CHAPTER TWO
DOCUMENTATION OF PROBLEM

Problem Evidence

Homework comes in many forms and has many definitions, although, when broken down, the definitions vary little. In one source, homework was defined as "tasks assigned to students by schoolteachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours" (Cooper, 2000). "Homework is a time honored strategy for developing learning skills and reinforcing knowledge gained within the classroom" (Simplicio, 2005). Homework can be used in many different ways. In another source, it is said that homework "helps students learn materials presented in class and it helps parents maintain a connection with a student and what is happening at school" (Kogan & Rueda, 1997).

Homework is an institutionalized practice that is necessary for students to incorporate the concepts of school into their own understanding. After-school student practice is necessary to reinforce crucial lessons. Teachers often do this by giving students extra practice or further investigation in the form of bookwork or paperwork. "Teachers depend on homework to have students complete unfinished work, to practice and reinforce class work and to communicate with parents" (Bryan & Sullivan, 1998, p. 263). "Homework is currently the most used preparatory and practiced activity assigned by teachers to reinforce student understanding" (Kogan & Rueda, 1997).

The positive benefits of homework are well documented. Homework is a means to impart the knowledge and skills that a teacher believes is important for a student's development. "Research indicates that children who spend more time on regularly assigned, meaningful homework, on average, do better in school and that the academic benefits of homework increase as students move into the upper grades" (NEA, 2007).

The benefits of homework do not only come from the academic lessons learned, but also from the practice of doing it. “Homework has numerous potential non-academic payoffs as well; most of these involve promoting student independence and responsibility. Finally, homework can involve parents and the broader community in schooling, increasing their appreciation of education and allowing them to reinforce students’ achievement” (Cooper, 2000).

Although homework has many positive influences in a student’s life, it is largely interpreted by the student population, and sometimes by parents, as a negative means to an end. An issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* described homework as a “waste of time and energy” (Bryan & Burnstein, 1998). Students frequently complain that homework seems meaningless to what they have learned and a repetition of what they consider unimportant concepts. “More homework is being piled on children despite the absence of its value” (Kohn, 2007). “It is an activity that students do not enjoy doing and it often becomes a constant source of frustration between parents and students. Homework is a stressor for many families. More time and energy can be wasted getting to homework than actually doing it” (Cale, 2007).

When students do not see the long-term benefits of learning academic lessons, homework becomes another task given by adults that the students do not want to do. Students seem to focus on the immediate cost of homework, the loss of time to play and having fun, while adults concentrate on the long-term benefits of homework (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004, p. 279). “While adults see the skills leading to future success, students see it as an immediate intrusion into their social life and their ability to pursue other more enticing activities” (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004). Homework seems like

a waste of time to many students and a cause for great emotional and mental frustration. Although homework can be a stressor in a student's life (Bryan & Sullivan-Burnstein, 1998), students need the benefits that come from such an institutionalized practice. Homework is often perceived as a difficult and inane task, but it need not be either.

It is both in the students' and the teachers' hands to make homework an important piece to their education. While it is obvious that the students often need to take their own assignments and responsibilities more seriously, it is also within the teacher's ability to make the homework seem pertinent and important to the students themselves. The teachers believe that homework must consistently be an extension of lessons, something that is both related to instruction while remaining important to the students' interests or goals. "The only way to end the battle is to make sure that the homework is relevant, varies, and takes place outside the classroom" (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004).

Teachers sometimes use homework as "busywork" instead of a means to strengthen or enrich concepts. "There is a need for consistency between the planned purposes of homework and the type of task assigned" (Callahan, Rademacher, & Hildreth, 1998). Also, by purposefully making homework something with which the parents can be involved, students and parents can find homework to be a means of communicating and relating. "What is needed is a different approach to homework which provides social interaction for family and peers while providing meaningful learning beyond the classroom" (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004, p.279).

There are always things that teachers can do to make homework more interesting; but ultimately, the completion of the homework becomes the student's responsibility.

Often students are not willing or able to successfully complete this requirement. That leaves a great gap between what the students could be achieving and what they do achieve.

Homework Completion Nationally

Within the educational system, homework non-completion is viewed as a problem. Although homework has played a significant role in education in the United States, there seems to be a large disparity between the amount of homework assigned by educational professionals and the amount of homework completed by students (Cooper 2000). A national study found there were a large number of students who did not do their homework, which led to poor academic standing. “Because there are positive relationships between homework and achievement it is disconcerting that approximately 28% of average-achieving students and 56% of students with learning disabilities have problems completing homework” (Bryan & Sullivan-Burnstein, 1998). The students with learning disabilities are the ones who could benefit most from the practice, yet they are reported to be the ones most frequently found with problems in homework completion.

According to three separate national studies, middle school students spend less than an hour nightly on homework, making it a simple means to academic achievement that remains untapped (Cooper, 2000) (CNN, 2003) (Toppo, 2003). “Contrary to popular belief, most students have less than an hour of homework a night” (Toppo, 2003). The academic benefits for doing homework are numerous, yet the same problem presents itself nationwide that the teacher researchers saw daily in local schools.

Analysis of Student and Parent Pre-surveys at Sites A and B

At Site A, grade seven, and Site B, grades nine through twelve, there was evidence that generated a need for a treatment to the problem of homework non-completion. Unless the student is intrinsically motivated, most students do not care if they miss a homework assignment periodically. Some students have taken the responsibility of homework seriously, on their own, without large extrinsic motivation, but not all are willing or able (Bafile, 2004). In the classes for this research, the percentage of the student population who chronically did not complete homework often resulted in failure of their academic courses. This was the population of students that this research team wanted to assist through action research. The researchers wanted to help the students with chronic homework non-completion by providing an after-school study hall to provide the help and time that the students may not always receive after school hours.

At Site B the need for a study hall had been previously determined and therefore was offered three days per week during the regular school hours. The inclusion of Site B in this research project was to gather data to help support the positive impact of a study hall on homework completion.

Analyzing grades and the number of incomplete assignments, as well as general trends in homework completion, were the first steps the researchers took. Next, consent forms were distributed and collected from participating non-research teachers who agreed to gather data for this project.

At Site A, pre-surveys, project intent explanations, and consent forms were distributed by mail to all seventh grade parents. At Site B, pre-surveys, project intent

explanations, and consent forms were distributed to only those parents of students who utilized the scheduled study hall twice per week or more. The intent of this pre-survey was to gather data regarding the factors that students feel impact their ability to successfully complete homework as compared to the factors that parents feel impact homework non-completion.

Below are the results for both Sites A and B for a study hall parent pre-survey, which contained eight questions. Included in the following tables are all responses as well as the percent of each response.

Table 1.

Responses to Parent Pre-Survey

1) I believe that homework is important	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	51	96.20%	2	100.00%
No	1	1.90%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	1	1.90%	0	0.00%

2) My child is assigned an excessive amount of homework	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	7	13.20%	1	50.00%
No	36	67.90%	1	50.00%
I have no opinion	10	18.90%	0	0.00%

3) My child needs additional help with homework	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	22	41.50%	2	100.00%
No	23	43.40%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	8	15.10%	0	0.00%

4) Out of school homework is a challenge at our home because:	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Not enough time	19	35.80%	2	100.00%
Extra curricular activities	19	35.80%	2	100.00%
Family Responsibilities	10	18.90%	1	50.00%
No one at home to help	7	13.20%	1	50.00%
Child refuses to do the work	2	3.70%	0	0.00%
No one understands the assignment	13	24.50%	0	0.00%

5) My child would benefit from an after-school study hall	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	32	60%	2	100%
No	12	22.60%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	9	17.00%	0	0.00%

6) If an after-school study hall was offered, I would want my child to attend.	Site A Out of 53	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	30	56.60%	2	100.00%
No	16	30.20%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	7	13.20%	0	0.00%

7) If you answered yes, how many times a week would you like your child to attend?	Site A Out of 27	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Once	3	11%	1	50%
Twice	16	59.30%	1	50.00%
Three	8	22.20%	0	0.00%

8) If you answered no, what constraints would stop you from sending your child to study hall?	Site A Out of 21	Percentage	Site B Out of 0	Percentage
Time conflict	4	19%	0	0%
Transportation	8	38.10%	0	0.00%
Not necessary	7	33.30%	0	0.00%
Other	2	9.50%	0	0.00%

Most parents believed that homework was an important part of their children's lives, and indicated students were not assigned an excessive amount of homework. The majority of parents responded that their children needed additional assistance and were in favor of having an after-school study hall. Several options were provided on the survey distributed to the Site A parents to assess the constraints that might negatively affect ability to utilize an after-school study hall. While transportation issues ranked the highest, simply not needing the help was a close second. At Site B, parent opinion did not have a great impact on the ability of students attending a study hall. This was important data to add to our research, as this would be a factor as we planned the second phase of our research.

In addition to surveying parents, students at both sites were given a similar survey to the one that appears above; however, they were given class time to complete the survey so questions could be answered by one of the teacher researchers. After an explanation about this research project, students were asked to sign and submit consent forms. Below are the results of the student surveys from both Site A and Site B.

Table 2.

Responses to Student Pre-Survey

1) I believe that homework is important	Site A Out of 127	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	90	70.90%	2	100.00%
No	19	15.00%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	18	14.20%	0	0.00%

2) Do you feel you sometimes need additional assistance on homework once you get home?	Site A Out of 127	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	63	49.60%	2	100.00%
No	55	43.30%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	9	7.10%	0	0.00%

3) Do you think you would benefit from a tutored study hall?	Site A Out of 127	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	57	44.90%	1	50.00%
No	42	33.10%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	28	22.00%	1	50.00%

4) Would you attend an after-school study hall?	Site A Out of 126	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	47	37.30%	2	100.00%
No	75	59.50%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	4	3.20%	0	0.00%

5) How many times a week would you attend?	Site A Out of 46	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Zero	0	0%	0	0%
One	12	26.10%	0	0.00%
Two	24	52.20%	1	50.00%
Three	10	21.70%	1	50.00%

6) Why would you not attend?	Site A Out of 127	Percentage	Site B Out of 0	Percentage
Not needed	31	24.40%	0	0.00%
Time/sport practice conflict	44	34.60%	0	0.00%
Transportation	22	17.30%	0	0.00%
Other	30	23.60%	0	0.00%

The examination of the pre-surveys parents and students showed similar responses; however the parents' percentages in most were much higher. Parents at Site A, (Tables 1 and 2, Question 1) believed that homework was far more important than students felt homework to be, with a comparison of 96.2% to 70.9%. At Site B, students and parents agreed on the importance of homework. There was agreement between parents and students at both sites that additional assistance was needed on homework at home (see Tables 1 and 2, Question 2). Although parents and students agreed that they would benefit from a tutored study hall (see Table 1, Question 5, Table 2, Question 3), at Site A, parents indicated a 60% "Yes" response while the students response was only 44%. At Site B, only 50% of the students responded that a study hall would be beneficial while 100% of the parents did. Parents and students at Site A strongly differed in their interest in attending a study hall. The percentage of parents who wanted their child to

attend a tutored study hall was 56.6% (see Table 1, Question 6), whereas only 37.3% of the students had the desire to attend (see Table 2, Question 4). In contrast to the large differences in the survey responses, when analyzing Table 1, Question 7 and Table 2, Question 5, parents and students at Sites A and B agreed that two times per week attendance in a study hall was adequate.

Core Subject Support for Intervention

At Site A, during a period of five weeks prior to the beginning of the after-school study hall, teacher researchers and consenting teachers collected data for all five core subjects. At Site B, teacher researchers and those additional consenting teachers gathered math data regarding homework completion. These percentages represented the total number of assignments completed divided by the total number of assignments given.

Table 3.

Pre-Intervention Homework Completion Percentage: Site A

Subject	Weeks 1-5
Social Studies	93%
Reading	91%
Science	94%
Mathematics	91%
Language Arts	91%
Average	92%

Table 4.

Pre-Intervention Homework Completion Percentage: Site B

Student	Weeks Prior to Study
#1	100%
#2	100%
Average	100%

At Site B, there were two students who participated in the study, only concerning their math grades. Both students had completed all assignments prior to the implementation of the study. It was the teacher researcher's hope that these students would keep these high completion rates.

Probable Cause

The teacher researchers believed that the causes for the problem of homework non-completion came from a multitude of factors. One factor that affected the completion of homework was the lack of time at home to complete the assignments due to other duties and obligations. The average junior high school student has seen an increase in necessary time for homework from 2 hours and 49 minutes to 3 ½ hours for homework weekly, making it difficult for some students who already spend much of their time on other activities (Ratnesar, 1996). Some students go home to a life of obligation with sports, clubs, activities, and responsibilities. "A lot of kids are pressured to do a lot of household work. The parents are out working and they cannot take care of the house. They expect that when they get home the house is going to be cleaned up. They might even have to cook or do the laundry. Those factors come into play, too" (Hinchey, 1996).

A second explanation to homework non-completion is the change in the typical household, which is no longer "typical." There are students who come home to a non-traditional home life where academics are a low priority. "Getting help with homework is often made worse because 69% of students from two-parent families and 85% from single-parent families return to homes where the adults have outside jobs" (Reach, 2004). There are students who go home and take care of siblings, or even their parents, and

cannot find the time to complete their homework. There are other students who do not go home but to a caregiver after school.

Another explanation for students not doing homework is a lack of motivation. Some students intrinsically aspire to do their best in any given situation while others try their hardest but cannot achieve without direct instruction. For some students no level of reinforcement is enough to motivate them to work independently.

Families who struggle economically showed a decrease in the ability to supervise homework due to the need to work long hours to support the family. Parents who had little to provide their children in terms of knowledge, money, or resources found their children falling behind others whose economic situation was more secure. Homework was a punishment for the poorer families who did not have access to the Internet or other resources available to them (James, 2000).

Finally, the lack of understanding of the subject matter factors into the reasons students are not doing homework. Often there is a gap between confusion and clarity that does not get filled before the student leaves the school. Some teaching styles do not coincide with a particular student, while other students may have a more difficult time with specific subjects. Even more difficult to overcome is a student's learning disability. "Many students in academic trouble report that they understand so little of the coursework that they couldn't possibly complete the independent work. And many feel that even if they did try, their efforts would be too little, too late" (Hinchey, 1996).

CHAPTER THREE
THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Many studies have been done on the topic of homework. Some of these studies have included research on homework completion, reasons for assigning homework, and correlation between homework and academic achievement. According to a national poll, only 10% of parents felt that their children were being assigned too much homework (Gill, 2004). It seemed reasonable, then, for the teacher researchers to assume that the inability of students to complete their homework was not caused by being overburdened with assignments. Children's ability to complete homework is more often influenced by "the availability of transportation, youth and family health, income levels, and 'levels of chaos' in the home" (James, 2000, ¶ 3). For this study, the teacher researchers provided an after-school tutored study hall. The teacher researchers understood that there could be a variety of reasons why homework could not be completed at home. When assigning homework, teachers made the assumption that a student's home life was conducive to the completion of homework (James, 2000). As this was not always the case, the teacher researchers believed that providing students the opportunity to complete their homework in a structured, supportive environment would increase overall homework completion.

Benefits of an After-School Study Hall

There were several benefits to providing an after-school program such as this. According to Chung & Hillsman (2005, p. 18), "Forty percent of a young adolescent's time is unstructured, unsupervised, and unproductive." They suggested that after-school programs not only provided a safe environment for students but also had greater residual effects such as higher scholastic achievement, lower truancy, and higher homework

completion rates. Satcher suggested that for students living in environments that made completing homework difficult, “an after-school program can give students an opportunity to study and complete homework assignments” (Saukup, 2006, ¶ 9).

A tutored study hall may also provide something else that a student’s home may not. Regardless of age or socioeconomic background, some children dislike doing homework. Thus, well into their early adolescence, they are easily distracted when they are trying to focus on their assignments (Xu & Corno, 2003). In the school environment, there are fewer distractions to lure the students away from their tasks at hand. In addition, there may be families who could not provide the necessary materials for students to complete their homework (Reach, Cooper, 2004). By having the study hall in school, there is a greater variety of resources available to the students. It may also have been that the ability of the family to help with homework was not adequate. Reach stated that parents report on their difficulty in helping their children with homework, as the parents often did not understand the assignment. Additionally, he stated that time available for parents to help their children was constrained due to the fact that many students have parents who work outside the home (Reach, Cooper, 2004).

The teacher researchers believed that by providing a tutored study hall, many of the homework completion obstacles could be overcome. Students were in a structured, safe environment, had access to resources, and received support and additional help from instructors. These components have been shown to create the most effective programs. Some of the after-school programs that were in these studies had shown a decrease of as much as 50% in missing assignments (Szeker, 2003, ¶13).

Project Objectives and Processing Statements

The project objective was stated: "As a result of providing a tutored study hall in which students will have access to materials and teacher support within a structured, safe environment, during the period of October 22, 2007 to November 16, 2007, the students of the teacher researchers who attend the study hall will increase their homework completion rate, as measured the homework completion tracking records, and teacher and student reflections." The intention of the study hall was to provide students with a supportive environment in order to improve their rate of homework completion. The teacher researchers understood that there were situations possibly beyond students' control that may have hindered them from completing their homework. However, the study hall gave the students an opportunity to have additional support.

During the pre-intervention period, the teacher researchers developed surveys to be completed by parents and students. These surveys were to reflect their perceptions regarding their feelings about homework and study hall (see Appendixes E and F). A homework tracking log (see Appendix G) was developed as a tool to keep track of students' homework completion.

Project Action Plan

<u>Prior to Documentation</u>

August 20, 2007 – September 14, 2007

- copy and assemble parent consent forms and letter of explanation – distribute by September 14, 2007
- copy and assemble 175 student consent forms and letter of explanation – distribute by September 14, 2007
- write formal letter to principal with timeline
– copy and assemble parent and student surveys

Pre-Documentation

August 27, 2007 – September 28, 2007

-teacher researchers will give cover letters and letters of consent to participating teachers – September 3, 2007

-teacher researchers will explain to participating teachers about data collection procedures and homework assignment procedures to be given to the study hall teacher tutors – September 3, 2007

-teachers collect consent forms – by September 28, 2007

-teacher researcher will compile list of participating students and assign an identification code to ensure participant anonymity

-each teacher will send surveys to participants' households via students – September 13, 2007

– participating students complete student surveys and collect – September 13, 2007

Pre-Intervention

September 14, 2007 – September 28, 2007

-collect parent surveys – by September 28, 2007

September 14, 2007 – October 12, 2007

-the participating teachers will record homework completion logs weekly, which will be filed in secure locations

October 15, 2007 – October 19, 2007

-teacher researchers will notify parents of the upcoming study hall schedule

-teacher researchers will remind administrations of the upcoming start date of the study halls

-teacher researchers will organize homework completion logs from pre-intervention period

Intervention

Week 1 - 4

October 22, 2007 – November 16, 2007

-teacher researcher 1 will assist in study halls on Tuesdays

-teacher researcher 2 will assist in study halls on Thursdays

-teacher researcher 3 will assist in study halls on Fridays

-teacher researcher A will assist in study hall on Mondays and Wednesdays

-assigned teacher will complete reflection at the end of each study hall session and will file in a secure location

-each student who attends the study hall will sign in at the beginning of each session and indicate on log what homework they intend to work on

-assigned teacher will file attendance log at the end of the study hall session

-students who attend the study hall will complete reflection journal at the end of each study hall session

-at the end of each study hall session, the assigned teacher will collect student reflection and file in a secured location

Post-Documentation

November 19, 2007 – December 21, 2007

-teacher researcher 2 will assemble student post-surveys– November 19, 2007
-teacher researcher 3 will assemble parent post-surveys – November 19, 2007
-teacher researcher 3 will have participating students complete student post-surveys - November 21, 2007
-teacher researcher A will have participating students complete student post-surveys - November 21, 2007

December 3, 2007 – December 14, 2007

-distribute parent post-surveys – December 3, 2007
-collect parent post-surveys – by December 14, 2007

January 14, 2008 – February 1, 2008

-teacher researcher 2 will compile results of student surveys
-teacher researcher 3 will compile records of study hall logs
-teacher researcher 2 will analyze student reflections
-teacher researcher 3 will analyze teacher reflections

Methods of Assessment

The teacher researchers used a variety of tools to assess the success of their project. The tools used were developed in order to give the teacher researchers a broader understanding of the outcome of their research.

During the pre-intervention period, participating parents and students completed short surveys (see Appendixes E and F). The surveys included questions regarding their belief of homework importance. They were asked to reflect on their feelings regarding the amount of homework assigned. They were then asked how they felt about the benefits of a study hall. The students were also asked about the reasons they would or would not attend a study hall. Also during this period, participating teachers were asked to complete a homework log (see Appendix G). This log detailed the amount of homework that had been completed or not completed in each of the core subjects for all participating students. This was turned in at the end of each week and was filed by the teacher

researchers in a secure location. Because this process continued throughout the intervention period, all pre-intervention homework logs were organized separately.

During the intervention period, the teacher participants kept homework logs, which were kept separate from the pre-intervention logs. In order to assess the number of students who chose to attend the study hall sessions, students were asked to sign in at the beginning of the session on the Study Hall Sign-in Sheet (see Appendix H). They were also asked to indicate which subject or subjects they were going to work on during the session. This sheet was then collected by the assigned teacher researcher and filed.

At the end of the study hall session, two other assessment tools used during this period were student and teacher reflections. The student reflection was completed during each study hall session by participating students (see Appendix I). The reflection included questions about what they accomplished during the session, why they came, and if they would come back. The final reflective question was posed to solicit ideas from students on possible improvements to the study hall. These were filled out at the end of each session and collected by the teacher researcher. It was then filed daily in a secure location. Also, at the end of each study hall session, the teacher researcher in charge of the study hall for that day filled out a reflection (see Appendix J). The teacher had to reflect on questions about the effectiveness of the study hall, any specific problems that arose, as well as the ability of the teacher researcher to assist the students on their homework, and suggestions for future study hall improvements. After gathering data for four weeks, the teacher researchers moved into the post-intervention period.

During the post-intervention period, the teacher researchers issued post-surveys to both the participating students and parents (see Appendixes K and L). The pre-surveys

and the post-surveys contained identical questions. In addition, the post-surveys contained additional questions seeking parent and student reflections regarding the study hall. One question that was added to both the parent and student post-surveys dealt with their feelings about the implementation of a study hall into the school day. At this time, the teacher researchers completed an overall reflection about the intervention attempted and began organizing the project results.

CHAPTER FOUR
PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

At Site A, teachers discussed previous experiences with the problem of homework non-completion. A study hall was not a part of students' daily schedule. Thus, the continuing lack of homework completion prompted the idea that the implementation of an after-school study hall might help students complete homework assignments with teacher support, time and resources that students may not have at home.

At Site B, teachers' reports of problems with homework non-completion had prompted the administration to consider removing homework from students' grade point averages, which would enable more students to end the quarter with passing grades. This prompted the initiation of the Math Lab study hall, which provided students with the opportunity to work on their homework under the guidance of a math teacher. Unlike the after-school program at Site A, Math Lab was a permanent part of the school's curriculum and was available every school day. At both sites, the teacher researchers followed similar action plans, having made the appropriate notifications to the principals and superintendents.

Prior to the study hall beginning, letters were sent to the parents (see Appendix C) reminding them about the study hall and the requirements for attending. At this point, the study halls began. Site A hosted study hall three days per week for one hour and twenty-two minutes after school, while Site B provided study hall two days per week, 50 minutes per session, during the school day. Students and teachers completed reflections (see Appendixes I and J) during each individual study hall, which helped document any difficulties within the study halls and provided suggestions for improvement. The

interventions continued for twelve sessions and data were collected on the rates of homework completion. At Site A, students who participated in this study were tracked in their five core subjects, while at Site B; data were collected from math teachers only, due to the fact that it was a math lab study hall.

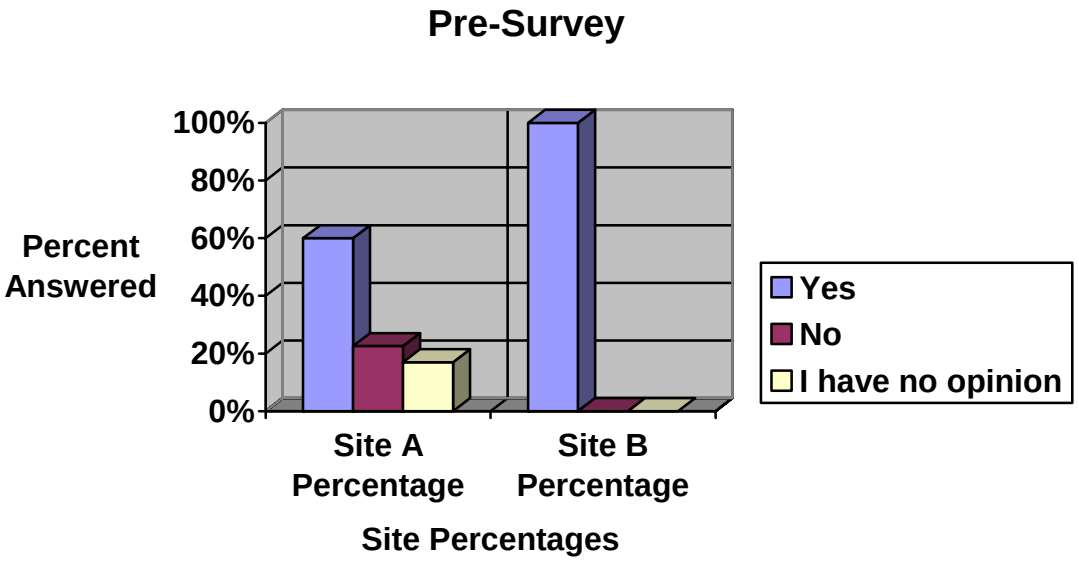
Presentation and Analysis of the Results

One week after the completion of the last study hall, post-surveys (see Appendixes K and L) were given to participating students and parents who had given consent to be part of the project. Distributed through students for completion at home, the data from the post-surveys were returned to the teacher researchers. The results were then organized and tabulated. The teacher researchers then compiled homework completion rates that had been previously tracked by the participating teachers throughout the weeks of the study to see if there was improvement with students' homework completion percentages.

Parent post-surveys from Site A indicated that there was a noticeable increase in the belief of the importance of an after-school study hall. Parent post-surveys at Site B showed no change in their belief of the importance of a study hall, since they had initially believed a study hall was important (See Diagram 1).

Diagram 1.

Parent Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Question: "My child would benefit from an after-school study hall."



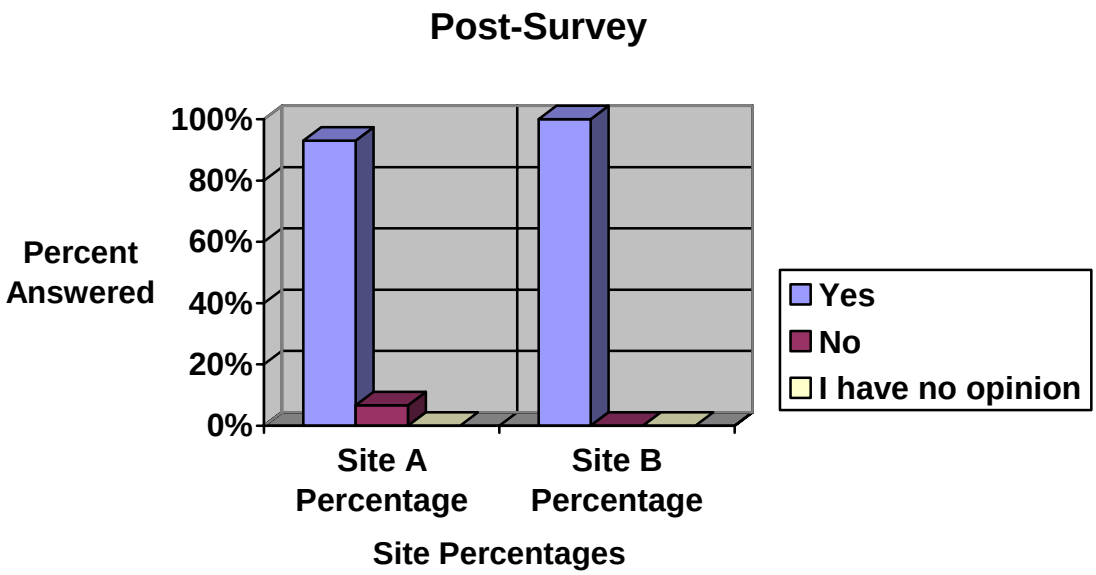
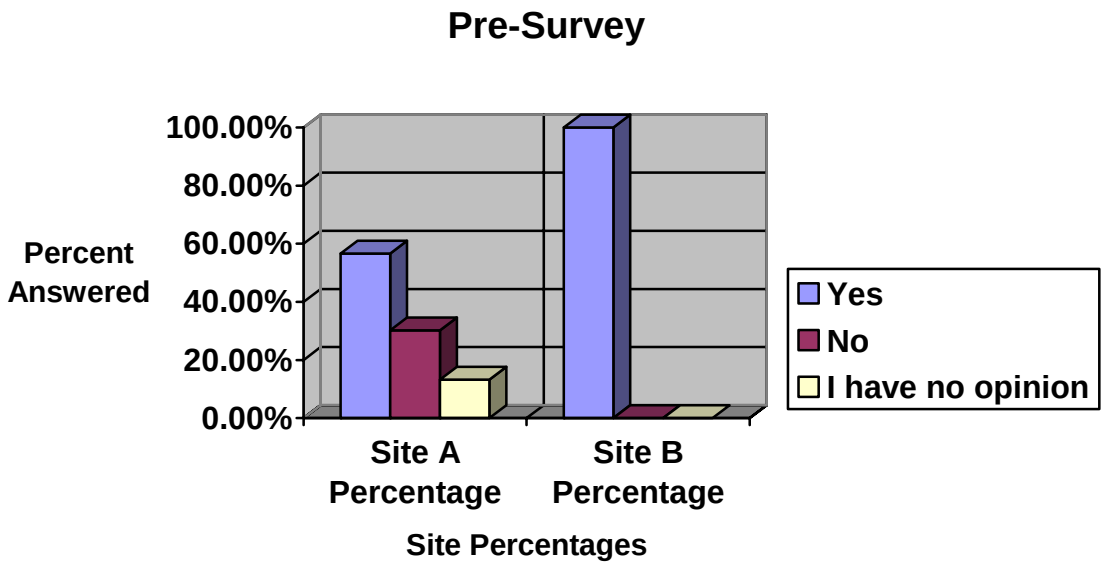
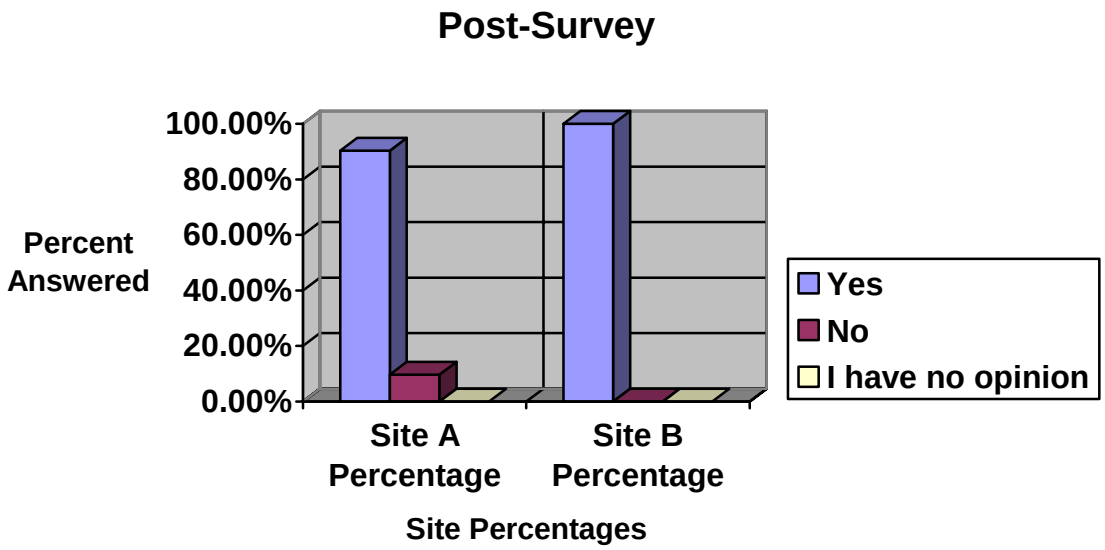


Diagram 2.

Parent Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Question: "If an after-school study hall was offered, I would want my child to attend."





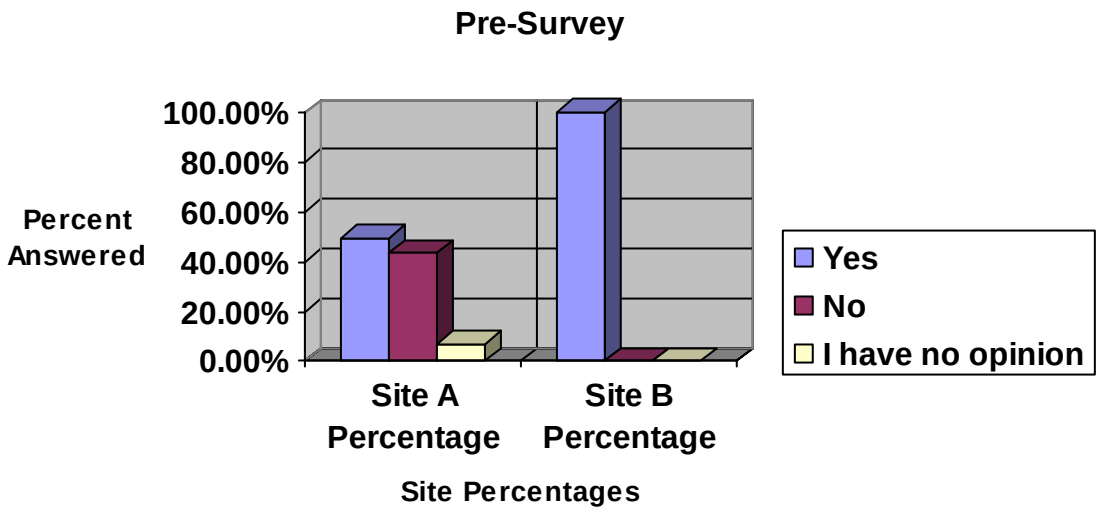
After comparing the students pre-surveys and post-surveys (see Appendixes E and F), the teacher researchers also saw a change in attitude from the participating students. Initially, about one-half of the students at both Sites A and B had indicated that they did not need additional help on homework at home (See Diagram 3). Interestingly, there was

a dramatic increase in the amount of students at Site A who felt they needed help on their homework at home. Further questioning was needed to clarify if, after the study hall, they had become more aware of the help they needed. Students at Site A responded positively to the fact that they benefited from the after school program.

At Site B, pre-surveys indicated that all the responding students had needed assistance at home in order to complete their homework, and post-surveys showed that this percentage dropped by fifty percent, indicating that the assistance they received during the study hall session was helpful, decreasing their need for assistance from home (see Diagram 3). Despite this positive change, the responding students did not show an increase in the belief that this type of program was beneficial to them (see Diagram 4).

Diagram 3.

Student Pre- and Post-Survey Questions: "Do you feel you sometimes need additional assistance on homework once you get home?"



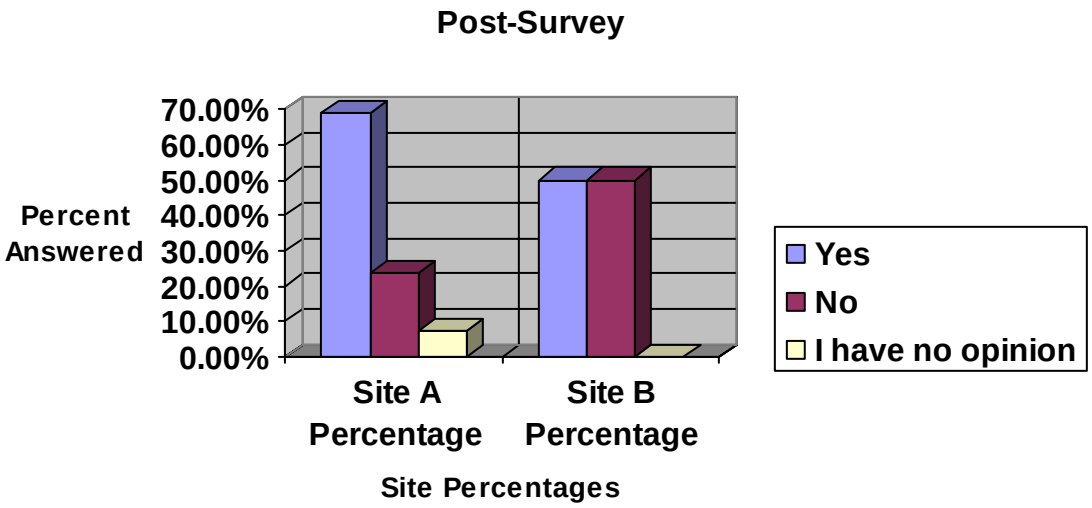
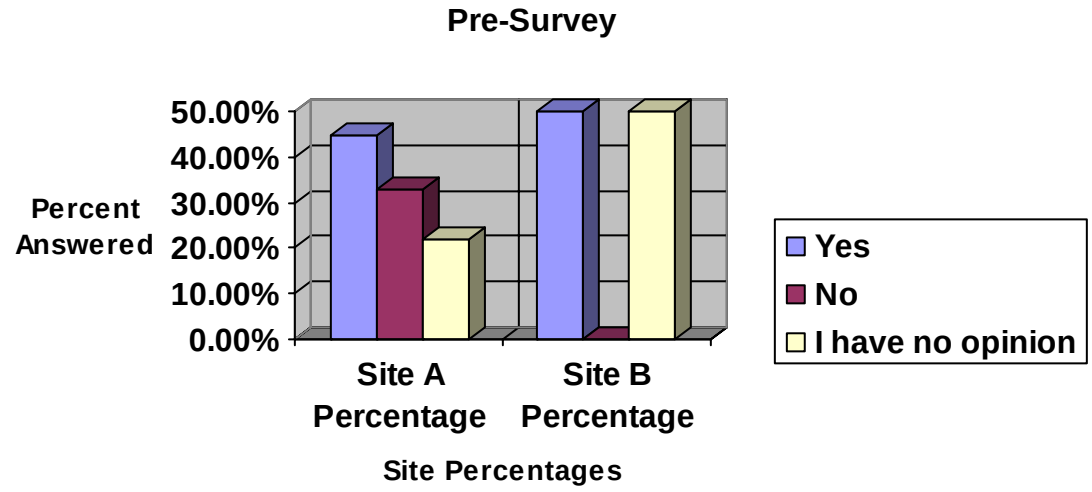
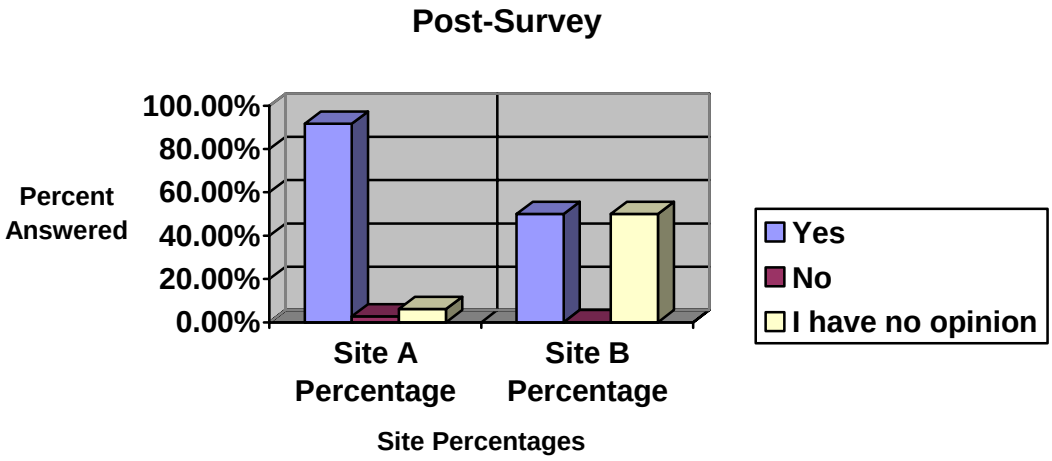


Diagram 4.

Student Pre-and Post-Survey Questions: "Do you think you would (have) benefit(ed) from a tutored study hall?"





At Site A, homework completion tracking logs (see Appendix G) were completed by participating teachers during both the pre-study hall period and the intervention period. The data collected from the pre-study hall intervention period showed that the majority of the 45 participating students did not exhibit excessive homework completion problems (see Table 3). The student pre-surveys also indicated that 37.3% of the responding students claimed they would not attend an after-school study hall (see Table 2, Question 4). When the teacher researchers finished their intervention and compiled the data, they found that 32.3% of responding students actually attended, less than had been originally anticipated. The data collected by the participating teachers showed there was a 4% decrease in homework non-completion. This correlated with an increase in homework completion rates.

At Site B, there was little to no change in homework completion over the course of this study. Of the two students who were in the study, there were two missing assignments.

Student Study Hall Reflections

During the course of the study hall, teachers and students at both sites completed reflections to chronicle any concerns or suggestions for improvement. Teacher researchers reviewed these comments in an effort to understand the dynamics of the study halls so that any necessary changes could be made in the intervention process in order to provide the best possible environment.

At Site A, student reflection sheets (see Appendix I) were completed daily by the participating students at the end of each study hall. Ninety-two percent of the students responded that they either received help or did not need any help. Ninety-seven percent of the students indicated that they would attend another study hall and ninety-one percent stated that there were no distractions during the time they were there. The teacher researchers also reviewed the comments that were written on the reflection sheets. The overall response from students was favorable towards the study hall. Many students commented that they enjoyed their time spent in the study hall and they were happy that they were able to finish their homework before going home.

At Site B, the two students who participated in the study responded that their time in the Math Lab was quite beneficial and indicated their intention to continue utilization of the math lab. The students' reflections indicated the environment was great, productive, and offered two direct suggestions: that it should be longer and snacks provided. Concern was indicated about access availability of the Math Lab. Since it was only available twice a week, during periods 2-6, many students were unable to attend because they had 1st or 7th hour study hall. Also, students were unable to receive help because they had questions on days the Math Lab was not available.

Teacher Study Hall Reflections

At Site A, review of the teacher researcher reflections showed a trend for students to work diligently for approximately the first 45 minutes of the 80 minute time period. However, students quickly became off-task after that. Some students wanted to rely heavily on teachers providing answers rather than guidance. The majority of students utilized the study hall to do mathematics, but the teacher researchers were not as versed in mathematics as was needed to provide adequate tutoring. In support of the intervention, the mathematics teacher, who was not a teacher researcher, had agreed to be available almost every day. Consideration needed to be made to provide adequate tutoring in each subject. Equally important was the need for the teacher researchers to know the daily homework assignments in each class. In this way, reminders could be given to students who found themselves without work to fill the time-period available. In a few instances students had finished their work within 15 minutes of the study hall and were left with nothing to do and no desire to be given practice work. Several students were perfectly content to sit and occupy themselves, but several others exhibited behavioral concerns. Teacher researchers explained that students needed to have enough homework/schoolwork to fill at least 60 minutes of the study hall to attend. This rule eliminated three students from attending sessions, but reduced behavioral problems.

Teachers at Site A stated in their reflections that there was an increase in camaraderie among not only students but between students and the teacher researchers during the duration of the twelve study halls. Understanding the characteristics of a middle school student, this was an important by-product of this research and should not be viewed lightly.

One problem occurred, commented on by all three teacher researchers at Site A, when the same child did not get picked up after school on time. The importance of being picked up on time had been stressed to both parents and students, yet, one of the teacher researchers had to stay 20 minutes or more after each session waiting with this student to be picked up. Not surprisingly, this student was one of the ones who did not have enough work to fill the time period but was quite happy to simply sit with the teacher researchers and visit.

At Site B, the two students within the survey utilized the study hall as frequently as possible. Student #1 used it often to discuss math, work through problems, and check through her work. Student #2, though coming quite often, did not use it as efficiently. She only did her math homework a portion of the time, and often used her time to socialize. The two students were often there at the same time but utilized the time for different reasons.

Post Survey Results

After the completion of the study halls at both sites, the teacher researchers issued post-surveys to the participating students and their parents concerning their experiences during the intervention period. The questions were very similar to the surveys at the beginning of the study, although there were some slight differences. When the teacher researchers designed the surveys as written for the Institutional Review Board, adequate consideration had not been given as to the style of questions needed for the post-surveys. Therefore, post-survey questions were rephrased at the end of the twelve study halls.

At Site A, data from the parent post-surveys showed that study hall was considered useful by the majority of the parents. The results were similar in the Parent

Pre-Survey, with a few more positive responses after the study hall's completion. In addition, most parents of Site A would like to see a study hall integrated into the daily schedule, which is one of the main goals of the teacher researchers. The parents at Site B did not change their opinions significantly from pre-survey to the post-survey. Following are the results of the parent post surveys from both Sites A and B.

Table 5.

Parent Post-Surveys: Sites A and B

1) I believe that homework is important	Site A Out of 30	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	29	96.67%	2	100.00%
No	1	3.33%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

2) My child is assigned an excessive amount of homework	Site A Out of 31	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	12	38.71%	1	50.00%
No	16	51.61%	1	50.00%
I have no opinion	3	9.68%	0	0.00%

3) My child needs additional help with homework	Site A Out of 31	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	17	48.94%	1	50.00%
No	12	40.435	1	50.00%
I have no opinion	2	10.64%	0	0.00%

4) Out of school homework is a challenge at our home because:	Site A Out of 47	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Not enough time	15	31.91%	2	100.00%
Extra curricular activities	11	23.40%	2	100.00%
Family responsibilities	8	17.02%	1	50.00%
No one at home to help	6	12.77%	0	0.00%
Child refuses to do the work	1	2.13%	0	0.00%
No one understands the assignment	6	12.77%	0	0.00%

5) My child attended the study hall	Site A Out of 31	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	31	100%	2	100%
No	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

6) If you answered yes, how many times a week did your child attend?	Site A Out of 30	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Once	11	36.67%	1	50.00%
Twice	11	36.67%	0	0.00%
Three or More	8	26.67%	1	50.00%

7) If you answered no, what constraints stopped you from sending your child to study hall?	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Once	0	0%
Twice	0	0.00%
Three	0	0.00%

8) My child benefited from an after school study hall.	Site A Out of 30	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	28	93%	2	100%
No	2	6.67%	0	0.00%
My child did not go	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

9) Do you think your child would benefit from having a study hall built into the school day?	Site A Out of 31	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	28	100%	2	100%
No	3	0.00%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

10) Was your child able to get the help they needed in the study hall?	Site A Out of 41	Percentage
Yes	40	98%
No	1	2.43%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%

11) Why would your child benefit from a built in study hall?	Site A Out of 41	Percentage
Child can get help	18	43.90%
Better grades	2	4.88%
Less stress	1	2.44%
Less work to bring home	4	9.76%
Able to focus better	6	14.63%
More time for outside activities	1	2.44%
Help should be provided in class	1	2.44%
Students need a break at the end of the day	1	2.44%
Class time already too short	1	2.44%

At Site A, the students who attended the study hall indicated, in their post-surveys, that the after-school study hall was beneficial and helped them complete their homework. The students' responses indicated their feeling that they had been given help that they needed and they would like to see a study hall built into the school day. The student responses were actually quite similar to the parent responses.

At Site B, the students found that the study hall was beneficial to them and attended it regularly. One student responded that they would like to see this study hall built into their daily schedule, while the other had no opinion. However, students who utilized the study hall found it beneficial and wanted to see the study hall continued. Following are the results of the students' post surveys from both Sites A and B:

Table 6.

Student Post-Survey: Sites A and B

1) I believe that homework is important	Site A Out of 42	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	35	83.33%	1	50.00%
No	3	7.14%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	4	9.52%	1	50.00%

2) Do you feel you sometimes needed additional assistance on homework once you get home?	Site A Out of 42	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	29	69.05%	1	50.00%
No	10	23.81%	1	50.00%
I have no opinion	3	7.14%	0	0.00%

3) Did you attend the study hall?	Site A Out of 42	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	42	100.00%	2	100.00%
No	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

4) If you answered yes, on average how many times a week did you attend?	Site A Out of 42	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
1	17	40.48%	0	0.00%
2	17	40.48%	0	0.00%
3 times a week	8	9.04%	2	100.00%

5) If you answered no, why did you not attend?	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Not needed	0	0%
Time/sport practice conflict	0	0.00%
Other homework	0	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%

6) Did you benefit from a tutored study hall?	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	2	100.00%
No	0	0.00%
I did not go	0	0.00%

7) Would you benefit from a tutored study hall built into the school day?	Site A Out of 36	Percentage	Site B Out of 2	Percentage
Yes	33	91.67%	1	50.00%
No	1	2.78%	0	0.00%
I have no opinion	2	6.06%	1	50.00%

8) Were you able to get the help you needed in the study hall?	Site A Out of 41	Percentage
Yes	40	97.56%
No	1	2.43%
I have no opinion	0	0.00%

9) In what other ways did the study hall help you manage your time?	Site A Out of 42	Percentage
Didn't rush through homework	6	14.29%
More time for sports	2	4.76%
Homework fresh in head	1	2.38%
Family time	4	9.52%
Able to finish homework	25	59.52%
More time to play	7	16.67%
Could work on projects at home	1	2.38%
Focus	7	16.67%
Help from teachers	14	33.33%
Helped with organization	3	7.14%
Good grades	2	4.76%
Less stress	1	2.38%

10) Why would you benefit from a study hall built into the day?	Site A Out of 42	Percentage
Could get it done at school	14	33.33%
Have time to work on projects at home	1	2.38%
Could be more active at home	1	2.38%
Can get help	11	26.19%
Get better grades	2	4.76%
More time for other things at home	3	7.14%
Less procrastination	1	2.38%

We compiled the data on the homework completion between the sites. Implementation of the study halls and data collecting occurred during a four week period at Site A and a six week period at Site B, with a total of twelve total study halls for both sites. The following are the results for Site A's homework completion rates for the four week period during study hall implementation:

Table 7.

Student Homework Completion Rates Before and During Intervention: Site A

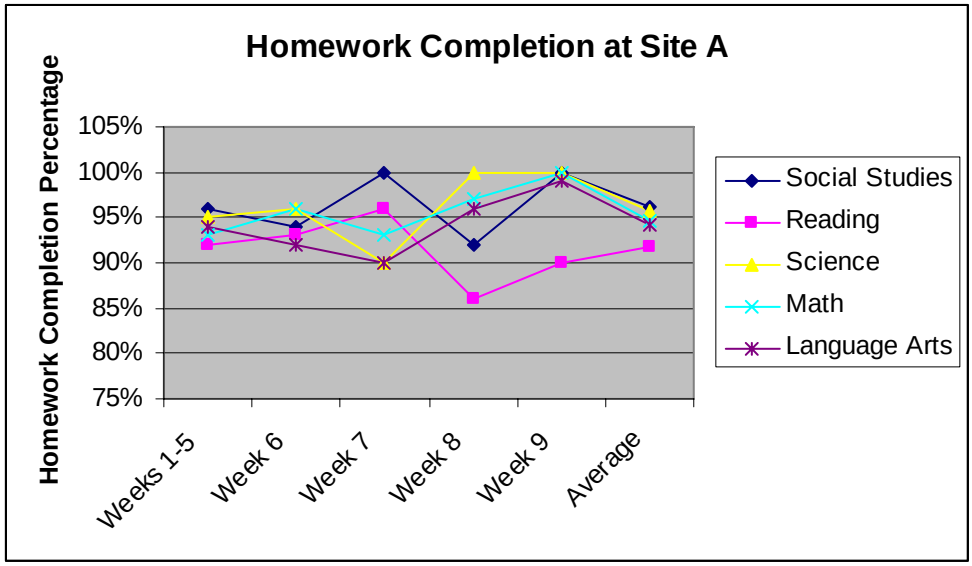
Subject	Weeks 1-5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Average
Social Studies	93%	94%	100%	92%	100%	96%
Reading	91%	93%	96%	86%	90%	92%
Science	94%	96%	90%	100%	100%	96%
Math	91%	96%	93%	97%	100%	95%
Language Arts	91%	92%	90%	96%	99%	94%
Average	92%	94%	94%	94%	98%	94%

Average Completion Before Study Hall:	92%	Average Completion During Study Hall:	96%

At Site A, the overall homework completion rate increased slightly, but not by any large margin.

Diagram 5.

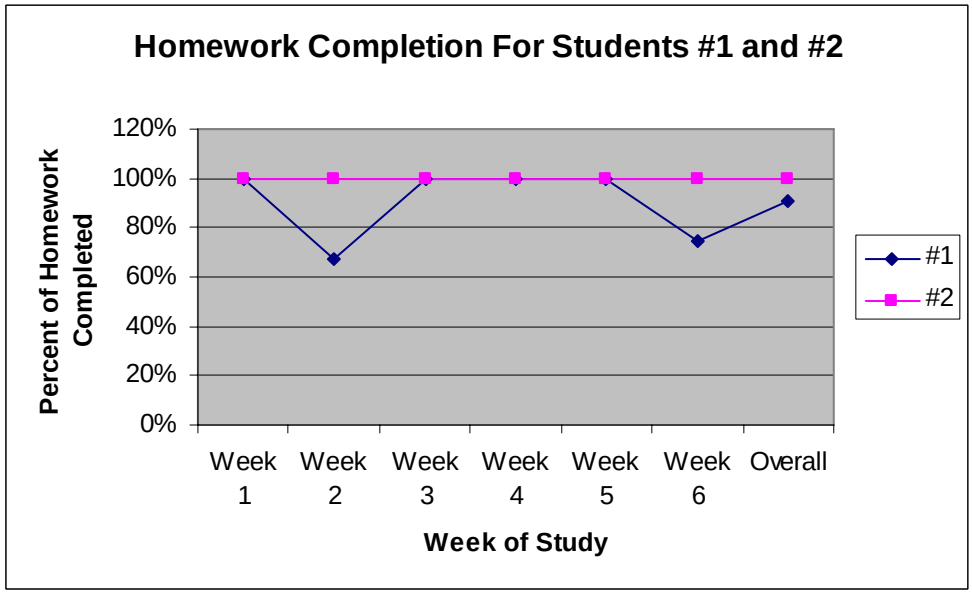
Homework Completion Percentage at Site A



Below are the results for Site B's homework completion rates over the 12 session implementation:

Diagram 6.

Homework Completion Percentage at Site B



Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the percentages being smaller than desired, the data shows that homework completion rates both increased and decreased during the study-hall implementation time period. At Site A, homework completion rose from 92% to 96%, up four percentage points. Site B had a slight drop in homework completion from 100% to 97%, down three percentage points. Although there was that drop at Site B, we can still perceive the study hall to be successful. Site B only had two student participants, and Student #1 only had two incomplete assignments, which were due to an absence and never completed.

There were several factors which impacted this overall positive outcome. Some would be the tutorial advantages of having teachers available, an environment conducive to homework, and time devoted to homework. It is believed that the assistance provided in these study halls was beneficial to the students' learning and should be further implemented. One-on-one tutoring is less anxiety producing and allowed for individualized instruction not always possible in the classroom or in the home environment. We recommend the use of an assisted study hall to any school who experiences a large drop in homework completion or any teachers who have the time and resources to further the students' understanding of the material in this one-on-one setting.

Reflection

Overall, we feel that this was a beneficial research topic The study was a good exercise in reflective practice as well as a useful application to prove to Site A's and Site

B's administrations that study halls could be vital to students if incorporated into daily scheduling.

Our research journey took somewhat of a different path than we intended when we developed our plan. Even though the class of 2007-2008 did not exhibit the degree of homework non-completion rates as had previous classes, the decision was made to explore the impact a school sponsored study hall would make on students' success. Initially, the plan was to have the study done entirely at one site, rather than being spread between a middle school and a high school. We adjusted to that change and found many factors that were applicable across many grade levels and not just at the middle school level. The idea of a tutored study hall was helpful not only as something to have for middle school students, but high school students as well.

One thing that surprised us was that parents were very encouraging and responded favorably to the idea of an after-school study hall. We expected a lot of objections, complaints, or frustrations from the parents about little contingencies, but were surprised at the general acceptance of the program. Parents seemed to generally support the study hall and the details that went along with it.

At Site A, we were unprepared to tutor some students in certain subject areas. Although we knew the answer to the problem we were unsure of the approach we should take to explain the steps. Techniques are constantly changing and we were unsure which process the students were taught to learn the concepts. At Site B, what I was not prepared for were the issues and attitudes of some high school students. In general, my background has been with middle school students and I had forgotten about the small squabbles and attitudes that some high school students express which can be quite different from those

of middle school students. Middle school students can often be corrected with a good speech or authoritative tone, but some high school students are not affected by these strategies and show lack of respect.

At Site A, during this process, our attitudes toward the need for study hall increased. As time went on, we saw that students not only needed this environment for academic needs, they also needed that time for socialization needs. Students who normally did not talk with each other conversed about homework, thus supporting their need to socialize. At Site B, my attitude did not change much, but some of the students' attitudes did. Some students thought that Math Lab would be a good place to come to avoid their study halls; a place that they could come to socialize. I had a few students come in with bad attitudes and dealt with them accordingly. Since Math Lab is voluntary for students, they can choose not to come back if I remind them that it is a place where work is to be done. I still had one student who came repeatedly and needed reminding that Math Lab is a place for work and not socialization.

At Site A, we learned that we have weaknesses in other curricular areas that did not help children. We learned that it was easier to relate with students in smaller groups as opposed to large class settings. We reevaluated our motivation for assigning homework after we saw the homework on which the students were working. We learned that peer teaching can be very effective and it increased their respect for each other. At Site B, I found that math was definitely a topic that was better taught one-on-one. Some students get lost in the shuffle of a large classroom and could not have their individual questions answered. It was quite beneficial for these students to have a teacher who could spend one-on-one time with them. Similarly, I found it difficult to give some

students adequate assistance when the Math Lab was full. Many of these students needed much individual attention, which could not be given when I had many students to attend to.

At Site A, we learned that every one of the students who attended really felt their homework, and their ability to do well on it, was important to them. We learned that this one-third of the student population was eager to not only learn, but to help each other when needed. In fact, we thought that some strictly came to the study hall to help others. At Site B, I learned, as said previously, that many students need individual attention to assist with their math and that some high school students carry with them an attitude that makes it nearly impossible to teach them.

At Site A, a few students learned things about themselves. They learned that they are not always correct. As peers tutored peers, we often observed verbal power struggles emerge. When dominance was not established, they would seek assistance from one of us and the correct answer was not always received by the “pushy” one. Students learned to listen to each other. In this small group situation, the removal of fear and anxiety allowed for more peer interaction than could be achieved in a regular classroom setting. By the third or fourth session, the need to out-talk each other in order to be heard had diminished and students were observed listening respectfully to each other.

At Site B, I thought that students who came in the Math Lab found out that they were not the only ones who struggled with math. You can see fragility in the students who came in, who thought that their concerns were stupid, and that they were therefore stupid. But I thought when they saw that there were others with similar concerns some of their confidence increased.

At Site A, the climate of the research site began with the expectation that the students would work very quietly either alone or together and for the whole session. They were encouraged to bring a snack and sit with their friends. Teacher researchers managed paperwork, tutored, and collected data during this time. Three sessions per week were scheduled. The first week went as designed, then during the second week as students became more comfortable with us in this non-threatening situation, more and more visiting began. Students would often sit with us at our table joking or chatting. They were given the ability to play music. Their talking got louder and a larger degree of playing around began. Some students began attending the study hall without having homework to do. They came simply to socialize. This resulted in the third week with a combination of highs and lows. Therefore, during the final week, we asked for quiet to resume and that the time is utilized fully. Students did not appear to have difficulty adjusting to the changes or accepting our wishes. On the final day of study hall, treats were brought for all the attending participants to thank them for being a part of our research. At that point, we also provided snack in response to their reflections.

At Site B, the climate has always been a one-on-one environment built to assist those with questions. The only time that it was not a good environment was when there were too many students, making it difficult for me to give the individual attention that was needed.

At Site A, we did not necessarily view teaching and learning differently, as a result of our experiences, but more altruistically. Giving a few students at a time more individualized instruction could benefit not only the students' academics, but also the relationship between students and teachers. Understanding how a student perceived

information would help a teacher build strategies to help the students learn. Being able to talk with students about the way they felt was as important to their education as books were. Unfortunately, with 25-30 students in a class, that opportunity rarely presents itself. At Site B, these experiences reminded me that not all students can learn math from a distance, from a non-engaged teacher reciting a script. Some students need individual attention and have math put into words they understand instead of the multitude of nebulous terms that math teachers often tend to reiterate. The experience helped to remind me not to let those students with difficulties in learning math get lost in the shuffle.

Overall, the study was a productive one. This information could be used at Site A to show the school board that a study hall would be a beneficial addition to the daily schedule. The information could also be used at Site B to inform the administration of how beneficial the Math Lab was and perhaps persuade them that it should be open more than just two days a week and offered for more class periods during the school day. We anticipate that homework completion is going to be a constant struggle for years to come, unless the issue is addressed by both the community and the administration. However, having the ability to offer a tutored study hall could help curb this growing educational issue.

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Appendixes

Appendix A
Student Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

CHILD'S ASSENT: I_____, understand why this research is being done. I understand how it may help me or other children . I have been told that I don't have to participate if I do not want to and that I can stop participating in this research any time that I want to for any reason. All the questions that I had about the study have been answered; I would like to take part in this study.

Student identities will be kept confidential by the assignment of a numerical code and all documentation will be kept confidential throughout the study. All documentation from this study will be destroyed no later than May 1, 2008.

_____

Signature of minor participant Date

Appendix B
Teacher Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Improving Homework Completion of Students Through Tutored Study Hall

I, _____, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this project. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

NAME OF MINOR:_____

_____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian Date

Appendix C
Parent Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

I, _____, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this project. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Student identities will be kept confidential by the assignment of a numerical code and all documentation will be kept confidential throughout the study. All documentation from this study will be destroyed no later than May 1, 2008.

NAME OF MINOR:_____

_____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian Date

Appendix D
Research Tracking Master

	Date____	Attended	Study Hall		# Of Assignments	
Name	Code	yes	no	total	# turned in	# NOT turned in

Appendix E
Pre-Survey for Parents

August 31, 2007

Parent Pre-Survey

As indicated in an earlier letter, a group of seventh grade teachers are conducting a research study to see if there homework completion increases for students attending a tutored study hall. As part of research before we implement the study hall, we would appreciate you filling out a short survey about your child. Please return this survey to one of us by Friday, September 7th. All research is confidential and anonymous; please do not put your name on this survey. All data will be destroyed by May 1st.

Please circle your answers

1. I believe homework is important.
   Yes No I have no opinion

2. My child is assigned an excessive amount of homework.
   Yes No I have no opinion

3. My child needs additional help with homework.
   Yes No I have no opinion

4. Out of school homework is a challenge at our home because;
   Circle all that apply
   - Not enough time
   - Extra curricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)
   - Family responsibilities
   - No one at home to help
   - Child refuses to do the work
   - No one understands the assignment

5. My child would benefit from an after school study hall.
   Yes No I have no opinion

Appendix E, continued

6. If an after school study hall was offered I would want my child to attend.

   Yes No I have no opinion

7. If you answered YES- how many times a week would you want your child to attend?

   Once Twice Three times a week

8. If you answered NO- what constraints would stop you from sending your child to study hall?
   Circle all that apply
   - Time conflict
   - Transportation
   - Not necessary
   - Other – please explain.

     _____

     _____

Appendix F
Pre-Survey for Students

August 31, 2007

Improving Homework Completion of Seventh Grade Students Through Tutored Study Hall

Student Pre-Survey

As you have been previously notified, a group of seventh grade teachers are conducting a research study to see if there are benefits that go along with homework completion to students attending a tutored study hall. As part of research before we implement the study hall, we would appreciate you filling out a short survey. All research is confidential and anonymous; please do not put your name on this survey.

Please circle your answers

1. I believe homework is important.
   Yes No I have no opinion

2. Do you feel you sometimes need additional assistance on homework once you get home?
   Yes No I have no opinion

3. Do you think you would benefit from a tutored study hall?
   Yes No I have no opinion

4. Would you attend an after school study hall?
   Yes No I have no opinion

5. If you answered Yes- how many times a week would you attend?
   1 2 3 times a week

6. If you answered NO- why would you not attend?

Circle all that apply

- Not needed
- Time/sport practice conflict
- Transportation
- Other – please explain_____

Appendix G
Homework Log

	Period __		Class	_____													
		MON			TUES			WED			THURS			FRI			
Name	Code	yes	no	ab	yes	no	ab	yes	no	ab	yes	no	ab	yes	no	ab	

Appendix H
Study Hall Sign-In Sheet

	Study Hall Sign in Sheet			Date____________			
Name	code						Other:
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
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		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	
		Math	Science	Social Studies	Reading	Language	

Appendix I
Student Reflections

Date: _____

STUDENT REFLECTION

Please answer each question as honestly as you can at the end of each time you attend study hall.

1. Why did you come to study hall today?
   _____
   _____

2. What subject(s) did you work on in study hall?
   Check all that apply
   - o Math
   - o Reading
   - o Language Arts
   - o Science
   - o Social Studies

3. Did you receive help from a teacher or another student in study hall?
   Yes No I didn't need it

4. Will you possibly come back to study hall again?
   Yes No I don't know
   Why? _____

5. Were there any distractions in study hall today?
   Yes No
   Please explain a yes answer._____

6. What do think should be changed about study hall if anything?

Appendix J
Teacher Researcher Reflections

Teacher Researcher Reflection Name_____
Date_____
Attendance_____

1. Evaluate today's study hall. What went well and what problems arose?

2. What problems, if any, did you encounter assisting students?

3. Describe the learning environment: (everyone working, some working, and interruptions.)

4. Suggestions for future study halls.

5. Evaluate after-study hall environment: (everyone picked up on time, x number of students, not picked up, action taken)

Appendix K
Post Survey for Students

Student Post-Survey

Your teacher appreciates your participation in this action research project. Please fill out this final short survey. All data will be destroyed by May 1st. Thank you for all your help.

Please circle your answers

1. I believe homework is important.
   Yes No I have no opinion

2. Do you feel you sometimes needed additional assistance on homework once you get home?
   Yes No I have no opinion

3. Did you attend the study hall?
   Yes No I did not go

4. If you answered Yes- on average how many times a week did you attend?
   1 2 3 times a week

5. If you answered NO- why did you not attend?
   Circle all that apply
   - Not needed
   - Time/sport practice conflict
   - Other homework
   - Other – please explain_____

6. Did you benefit from a tutored study hall?
   Yes No I did not go

7. Would you benefit from a tutored study hall built into the school day?
   Yes No I have no opinion
   Why?_____

Appendix L
Post Survey for Parents

January 7, 2008

Parent Post-Survey

As you know, we have been offering a tutored study hall as part of our action research project. Please fill out this final short survey even if your child never attended a study hall session. All data will be destroyed by May 1st. Thank you so much for all of your help and support.

Please circle your answers

1. I believe homework is important.
   Yes No I have no opinion

2. My child is assigned an excessive amount of homework.
   Yes No I have no opinion

3. My child needs additional help with homework.
   Yes No I have no opinion

4. Out of school homework is a challenge at our home because;
   Circle all that apply
   - Not enough time
   - Extra curricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)
   - Family responsibilities
   - No one at home to help
   - Child refuses to do the work
   - No one understands the assignment

5. My child attended the study hall.
   Yes No

6. If you answered YES- how many times a week did your child attend?
   Once Twice Three times a week

Appendix L, continued

7. If you answered NO- what constraints stopped you from sending your child to study hall?
   Circle all that apply
   - Time conflict
   - Transportation
   - Not necessary
   - Other – please explain.

     _____
     _____

8. My child benefited from an after school study hall.
   Yes No My child did not go

9. Do you think your child would benefit from having a study hall built into the school day?
   Yes No I have no opinion
   Why? _____
   _____