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A Mixed-Method Study of Kindergarten through Third-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Homework

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by

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

This mixed-method research study examined the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding the use of homework in their classrooms. Electronic surveys were sent to 190 kindergarten through third-grade teachers in seven school districts from five counties in Central Missouri. A total of 47 educators chose to respond to the open- and closed-ended questions. The results of this study showed most of the respondents believed in the benefits of homework for academic achievement. The quality and quantity of assigned homework were important characteristics for educators from both large and small school districts. The lack of parental support was considered one of the top three main barriers teachers expressed they faced when assigning homework tasks. Finally, the actual definition of homework was often confused among the educator respondents, which indicated further research defining homework and teacher expectations would be valuable to administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

Homework has been a perpetual hot topic in the world of education (Valdez, Stilebouer, Moore, & Banuelos, 2009). Traditionally, homework has been viewed as school work completed at home (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). Stakeholders from all realms−administrators, teachers, parents, students and the general society—appear to have held strong opinions on the usefulness and effectiveness of homework. While many individuals have credited the benefits of employing homework, others have concentrated on the weaknesses and disadvantages associated with homework (Samm & Jeong, 2013). The aim of this study was to examine perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding homework and its effect on student growth including the impact of homework on students' academic achievement in the third-grade of elementary school according to their teachers.

Student growth measures, commonly referred to as academic achievement, have often been focused on the core academic subjects, such as mathematics, science, social studies, reading comprehension, and language arts (Cunningham, 2012). Cunningham (2012) believed student growth was likewise contingent on a myriad of factors including the educational setting and the child's circumstances. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the 2014 publication *Health and Academic Achievement*, defined academic achievement as "academic performance, education behavior, and students' cognitive skills and attitudes" (p. 2). Academic performance was referred to as class grades and standardized test results, while education behavior dealt with attendance and behavioral concerns at school (CDC, 2014). Concentration, memory, and moods portrayed at school fell under the cognitive skills and attitudes realm (CDC, 2014).

Children who were unable to master the basic skills needed to be successful in the educational setting were more likely to fall behind fellow classmates and continually struggle with academic engagement (Rabiner, Godwin, & Dodge, 2016).

The focus of this study was on the issue of homework and the ramifications of the status of homework use in schools. The perceptions of student growth through homework in five counties in Central Missouri were investigated as a possible link between homework and academic achievement among lower elementary students. Theories related to human resources and motivation were established to aid in building the conceptual framework. A statement of the problem along with the purpose and significance of the study will follow. Key terms will be defined and the limitations and assumptions of the study provided.

Background of the Study

The mere mention of the word homework has conjured a variety of strong emotions from an assortment of stakeholders (Valdez et al., 2009). Some teachers feel strongly homework has been essential to success while some students and parents view homework as an unnecessary task which takes away time spent with family (Hampshire, Butera, & Hourcade, 2014). Regardless of the personal views of individuals, some researchers have found positive effects of homework, when used as a view of learning, and the resulting beneficial contributions to students' educational pursuits (Vatterott, 2014). Conversely, other research studies have found homework to be destructive in nature and to have potentially detrimental effects on a student's whole persona (Hampshire et al., 2014). With conflicting research available surrounding the topic of homework, a question which has surfaced for many educators is, what is best for

students? Is there a right or a wrong answer to the value of homework?

Bagby and Sulak (2014) posed the same questions regarding the purpose of homework and pondered whether children were being hurt with the current policies. Many teachers and schools have followed the homework policy supported by the National Parent Teacher Association which has advocated the 10-minute rule regarding homework in which students would have 10 minutes of homework per grade level (Vatterott, 2017). Following this rule, a first-grade student would have 10 minutes of homework per evening, and a fourth-grade student would have 40 minutes of work to complete at home. While there are currently no federal or state laws specifically pertaining to assigning or completing homework, the Family Engagement Act of 2015 has outlined policy statements regarding parental rights for the education of children (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). The Supreme Court has traditionally upheld the rights of parents to make decisions regarding their children's education ("Understanding the Parental Rights Amendment," 2017). Proponents of the Parental Rights Amendment movement purported possible legislation would continue to protect parents and their rights regarding their children ("Understanding the Parental Rights Amendment," 2017). Opponents of the proposed legislation argue it would weaken the rights of parents and strengthen the governments' control over parents and their rights ("Understanding the Parental Rights Amendment," 2017).

Arguments have been made supporting the detrimental effects homework can have on individuals (Hampshire et al., 2014). Hampshire et al. (2014) raised concerns about the emotional effects homework may have on students. Students who have often been motivated by the thoughts of free time after school may have become discouraged

by additional schoolwork and felt assignments were unreasonable (Buell, 2004). This extension of the school day has often burdened parents which may indicate the negative effects of homework may be experienced by family members as well as the student to which the assignment was directed (Hampshire et al., 2014). Fox (2016) interviewed mothers of primary-aged students in an after-school program and discovered many of the mothers were fearful of not being able to assist their children academically as the child progressed through school. Pressman, Sugarman, Nemon, Desjarlais, Owens, & Schettini-Evans (2015) agreed the perceived ability level of the family members was a major influence on interactions between the student and family members during the progression of homework in a students' educational career.

Biscoglio and Langer (2011) noted students' lack of sleep, play, and family interactions as downfalls of homework assignments. The time spent after school completing homework assignments may be replacing time used for active play or sports, which could be imperative for overweight children (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Students with too much homework often have exhibited psychological fatigue which could have caused decreased participation in extracurricular activities and community service (Samm & Jeong, 2013). Pressman et al. (2015) suggested some possible negative concerns to students stemming from homework extensions which included sociological, emotional, and educational drawbacks. For students who have performed below grade-level expectations in the classroom, homework may have strengthened negative views of school and education (Bagby & Sulak, 2014). According to Jenson (2013), "Acute and chronic stress, known as distress" is dangerous (p. 29). However, stress related to homework and the amount of time necessary for completion could be healthy in small

doses.

Proponents of homework have argued there are benefits to school work completed outside the school day (Fox, 2016). For some educators, homework was used to fulfill academic requirements due to a lack of time in the regular school day (Pressman et al., 2015). Other educators have strongly considered the organizational skills a student has learned while completing homework, as well as time management skills discovered, as having been beneficial to students (Hampshire et al., 2014). Some experts suggested the influence homework can have on teaching personal responsibility may have an impact on the child beyond their school career (Hampshire et al., 2014). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) found parents appreciated the self-discipline students gained from homework as well as the sense of responsibility and personal motivation the activity provided. The opportunity to improve study habits and become lifelong learners beyond classroom walls were found to be benefits (Xu, 2013). Carr (2013) concurred constructive homework has the capability to enhance learning away from the classroom setting. Watkins and Stevens (2013) suggested if homework is necessary for academic growth, perhaps the focus could be on the quality of the homework assignments rather than the quantity of assignments given. Biscoglio and Langer (2013) stressed the quality of homework needs to be addressed rather than the total eradication of homework.

Homework assignments seem to vary from grade to grade, subject to subject, and teacher to teacher. Carr (2013) expressed the opinion homework must be unequivocally related to work in the classroom. Dr. Cathy Vatterott (2010), University of Missouri-St. Louis education professor wrote about five characteristics of quality homework. According to Vatterott (2010), quality homework must have (a) purpose, (b) efficiency,

(c) ownership, (d) competence, and (e) aesthetic appeal. The amount of time required to complete homework may vary depending on the age and ability of the child (Vatterott, 2017). The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and National Education Association (NEA) both recommended the 10-minute rule (Vatterott, 2017). Following this guideline, a second-grade student would have a maximum of 20 minutes of homework a night, while a third-grade student would have a maximum of 30 minutes a night (Vatterott, 2017).

The role of communication among the school personnel and families could also impact the perceptions and realities of homework (Samm & Jeong, 2013). By providing families with information regarding homework policies and expectations, as well as student needs, schools might avoid possible pitfalls and failures (Carr, 2013). Whitaker and Fiore (2001) stressed the importance of parental involvement in positively influencing student academic achievement in school. In their case study focusing on No Excuses Homework, a homework policy designed by a rural high school in the Midwest, Watkins and Stevens (2013) discovered parents wanted to be kept informed. Faculty at the school studied by Watkins and Stevens (2013) were responsible for opening the lines of communication through emails, phone calls, and text messages. Once the teachers in the study made the initial contacts to explain the policy, both parents and students began to take responsibility for completing homework (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). When parents were informed and comprehended the expectations of the teacher and school, the lines of communication were then opened for future interactions (Watkins & Stevens, 2013).

Although homework has been a widely used form of home-school

communication, its effect on student growth is yet unclear as "even education experts disagree about what's best for kids" (Reilly, 2016, para. 7). There have been ways to measure student growth, one of which has involved standardized testing (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart, & Roy, 2012). Catts and Kamhi (2017) recognized standardized tests as minute representations which frequently failed to coordinate with the instruction given. Focusing on reading assessments, Wixson (2017) expressed doubt in regards to the use of one assessment would provide a clear understanding of an individual's reading capabilities due to various circumstances which could impact the assessment process. Cunningham (2012) stressed the importance of "accurately measuring student progress" in relation to determining responsible student growth (p. 3).

Whereas the American educational system has deemed the measurement of student growth precisely and regularly as important, so too, is the understanding of what students must have to perpetuate academic growth, such as meta-comprehension strategies and recognition of cognitive abilities (Voorhees, 2011). Cognitive abilities have been described as the skills used to reason, remember, understand, problem solve, and make decisions (Bernstein et al., 2012). Jensen (2013) wrote learners who grapple with cognitive abilities tend to disengage or misbehave, however, "cognitive capacity is teachable" (p. 28). Cognitive abilities could be improved or hampered by the environment of the student (Bernstein et al., 2012). To counteract the environmental risks to cognitive ability, Bidwell (2013) recommended intervention strategies could be started at birth, especially with families who were considered high-risk.

There are many factors within the school setting which may influence student growth (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015; Mahoney, 2015). Mahoney (2015) stressed

consistent attendance in the educational setting was necessary for students to grow into industrious and constructive citizens. "Every instructional day counts. Every minute in that instructional day matters" (Mahoney, 2015, p. 125). To improve student growth, both strong leadership and a positive educational climate are essential (Allen et al., 2015). One way for school district personnel to improve school climate has been to examine the leadership styles of the building level principals and observe the effects on the school (Allen et al., 2015). Principals who were cognizant of the success of their schools understood the significance of the teacher and their potential impact on student growth (Allen et al., 2015). Jensen (2013) explained the educator makes the relationship with the students and thus guides the students to see "a viable reason to stay in the academic game" (p. 26). Buettner, Hur, Jeon, and Andrews (2016) agreed it was the teacher who was the most fundamental component to achieving student growth and success.

Just as dynamics within the school have influenced student growth, there have been other factors that deserve consideration as well. For example, parental involvement, family structures, and the health of the child have been shown to influence student growth and progress (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Ceka and Murati (2016) explained children have two primary educators in their lives, their parents, and their teachers. Andrews (2015) agreed, "As long as there are children, there will be parents" (p. 130). Benner, Boyle, and Sadler (2016) found parental involvement with the education of their children has been found as a strong link to the child's academic growth and success. The family structure within the United States has changed over time resulting in a variety of living situations for children (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012; Krueger, Jutte, Franzini, Elo, & Hayward, 2015). Crosnoe and Benner (2012) noted even though the family structure has

markedly changed, the educational system has not. Pertaining to the health of children, the CDC (2014) acknowledged the amount of time children spend in school results in two meals a day for students as well as possibly being the only source of physical activity children receive. Students who do not receive proper nutrition and exercise have been shown to struggle with concentration and listening which could impact their growth (Jensen, 2013). When school district personnel invest in the health of the students, such as providing proper nutrition and opportunities for exercise, they are contributing to the health of the future (CDC, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework which guided this study was the human resource lens. The human resource framework, as defined by Bolman and Deal (2013), was deeply rooted in communication between individuals and organizations. Bolman and Deal (2013) described the human resource frame as the "fit between human needs and the organizational requirements" (p. 113). With a focus on people and how they act, react, and interact (Bolman & Deal, 2013), the human resource frame has served as a logical choice in the discussion of homework and student growth. Human needs, motivation, and interpersonal relationships were key to the human resource framework and girded the research direction of this study.

One characteristic of the human resource frame was the awareness of human needs. As Bolman and Deal (2013) authored, "people need each other" (p. 117). Choices may be guided by needs, but it has been often difficult to distinguish the desires and wants of people (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Abraham Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs focused on five levels of needs of individuals. Beginning with basic physiological

needs, including food, water, oxygen, and sleep and eventually building to one's full potential with self-actualization, each need must be met before progress could be made to the next level (Bernstein et al., 2012).

Motivation, also under the realm of human resources, could be intrinsic or extrinsic (Bernstein et al., 2012). Consideration of the needs an individual possesses would be a required step to achieving motivation (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Dweck, Walton, and Cohen (2014) reflected on incentives from the self-esteem movement of the 1990s when students were praised for their abilities and made to feel good about themselves as a form of motivation. However, further study showed encouraging students for their efforts and approaches to learning was more effective than praising their talent and perceived intelligence (Dweck et al., 2014). Coining the term academic tenacity, Dweck et al. (2014) discovered students would put forth the effort if they believed in the eventual compensations for all their challenging work. Academic tenacity has been defined as a mindset which allows students to look toward long-term goals and possess the wherewithal to stand up to the challenges faced in pursuing an education and success beyond traditional schooling (Dweck et al., 2014).

A final consideration within the human resource framework would be the development of interpersonal relationships. Bolman and Deal (2013) explained while there would be countless high points and low points in relationships with others, the demand for relationships were a vital part of everyday life. The Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education within the American Psychological Association (APA, 2015) prepared a document discussing the top psychological principles for teaching and learning in early childhood, elementary and secondary schools. Within these principles,

the value of interpersonal relationships was considered. Interpersonal relationships, in cooperation with communication, were vital to the teacher-student-learning process (APA, 2015). In order to assist in building and maintaining relationships, five suggestions have been made: (a) provide a safe and secure environment, (b) deliver clear behavioral expectations, (c) offer opportunities to learn social skills, (d) maintain a positive social climate, and (e) develop clear and thoughtful communication (APA, 2015). When utilizing the three guiding principles of the human resource frame, identification of human needs, providing motivation, and promoting interpersonal relationships, schools can become the educational institutions children deserve.

Statement of the Problem

The usefulness of effective homework (Carr, 2013) as well as how to best measure a students' academic growth (Haskins, Murinane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012) have been around for many years. Researchers have not agreed at what stage of children's development does homework help or hinder young learners. Buettner et al. (2016) pointed out there has not been any universal educational requirements for those in pre-kindergarten educational settings. It has become increasingly important to provide equal and quality opportunities for all children as they begin their educational journeys to help achieve equality for all learners, especially for children from disadvantaged areas (Blair & Raver, 2014). Blair and Raver (2014) continued explaining, "Children who don't develop age-appropriate literacy skills by the end of third-grade are at a high risk of failure" (p. 58). In a study by Blair and Raver (2014), children who have received effective instruction in the early years of schooling have been found to be successful regardless of disadvantages.

Many teachers have utilized homework to bridge the communication gap between home and school as well as to provide additional opportunities for learning to take place (Pressman et al., 2015). Unfortunately, not all students have had families available at home to assist in completing and returning homework (Payne, 2013). If a student comes from a poverty situation, the likelihood of having the resources available to aid in school work at home may be small (Payne, 2013). While the lack of resources may not be the fault of the young learner, it may put them at a disadvantage when it comes to academic achievement (Payne, 2013). Smith and Wrigley (2013) wrote educators need to find ways to instruct and guide learning to aid students in pushing past the obstacles presented when resources are lacking in the home.

When it comes to measuring student growth, there are a multitude of approaches that may be used to measure the students' progress. For example, teachers have used informal assessments as one way to measure the growth of their students (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Additionally, most districts have measured student growth using grades at the completion of the school year (Morrisey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014). State assessments, conversely, often vary. The state of Missouri has used the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) since the 1993 Outstanding Schools Act was initiated (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2017). It was designed to assess how well Missouri students knew the skills required from the Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) (MODESE, 2017). Texas implemented the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in 2012 to provide yearly assessments for the students of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2017). Florida has provided assessments for their students with the Florida Standards Assessment with the

intent to measure Florida students on the state standards (Florida Department of Education, 2017). The problem remains, homework is still widely used in many school districts and individual classrooms and yet there has been no viable proof it serves as an effective tool to help students learn and prepare for assessments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding homework use in their classrooms. Various aspects of homework were taken into consideration as well. This study added to the literature on the topic and may help provide information to educational stakeholders regarding the use of homework as a tool to benefit student growth. The information gathered from active kindergarten through third-grade teachers in five counties in Central Missouri provides material which may enable future elementary educators to support best practices for all students. Understanding the impact homework may or may not have on academic achievement will enable educators of young children to provide academic pursuits best suited to the educational success of the child whether during or after the traditional school day.

Using a mixed-method study, the researcher provided the teacher participants with a survey utilizing both open- and closed-ended questions. The questions allowed the participants the opportunity to identify how homework was used in their respective classrooms and the respective student completion rates of homework. The rationale behind this study was the significance of providing all students with the best possible educational pursuits to aid in student growth and whether homework qualifies as a tool to aid in the quest for academic achievement. Also of interest to the researcher was the

question of does the size of the school district impact the homework perceptions of the classroom teachers?

Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the researcher outlined key questions to guide the study. Within the context of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

2. What barriers (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework assigned, or (d) the nature of the assignments, inhibit student completion of homework the most?

3. In what ways does the size of the school district impact the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

Significance of the Study

The lack of practical guidelines from teachers regarding homework has caused frustration for some families (Carr, 2013). Research by Pressman et al. (2015) found first and second-grade students were bringing home 30 to 60 minutes of homework per evening, which was triple the recommended time of the National PTA and NEA of 10 minutes per evening per grade level. Conversely, other parents feared no-homework policies had been detrimental, and their child had lost out on academic benefits (Reilly, 2016). "Meaningful homework should be purposeful, efficient, personalized, doable, and inviting" (Vatterott, 2010). Carr (2013) emphasized homework could be a respected tool used to support classroom learning if utilized correctly.

For schools to show improvement in climate or student growth, respect towards students and their families, as well as the students' educational needs, must be at the forefront of the educational mission (Smith & Wrigley, 2013). In the publication, *The Condition of Education 2017*, published by the U. S. Department of Education, a longitudinal study was completed on entry-level kindergarteners in 2011 (McFarland et al., 2017). The study showed children in kindergarten who had the risk factors of poverty and parents with low academic attainment were found to perform at lower academic achievement levels in reading, mathematics, and science through third-grade (McFarland et al., 2017). Smith and Wrigley (2013) claimed student academic assessments should be authentic and connected to significant activities to deliver beneficial feedback. There has been a need for quality assessments to accurately and fairly assess student growth. The study findings of this research may help school personnel in determining the best uses of homework and its connection to student growth.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the preconceived notions individuals have regarding homework. An individual's prior experience with homework could cloud their judgment and provide a biased response. Homework demands have changed with the use of technology, and the expectations of teachers may have changed as well. Another limitation involved issues with data collection, or more specifically, the potential issue of the classroom teachers not participating. Further limitations included the possibility of researcher bias as the researcher is a current lower elementary teacher.

Assumptions

The first assumption of this study was the sample size of the participants would be

adequate to compile reliable data. The sample included kindergarten through third-grade educators in seven school districts from five counties in Central Missouri. It was assumed this group would be a fair representation of educators in Central Missouri. Another assumption was the teachers who received the surveys would complete and return the surveys in a timely manner and within the time frame requested by the researcher. The use of electronic surveys for the educators was an assumption in which all who wished to participate would be permitted. It was also assumed the educators would reply honestly.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms were defined:

Academic achievement. Academic achievement has been described as academic performance, education behavior, and students' cognitive skills and attitudes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

Academic tenacity. Academic tenacity has been expressed as the mindset students achieve which allows them to look toward long-term goals as well as the means to face academic and personal challenges (Dweck et al., 2014).

Assignments. Assignments have been defined as work to be completed by students in which the teacher has planned, prepared, and provided feedback upon completion (Hampshire et al., 2014).

Cognitive ability. Cognitive ability has been explained as the capacity to reason, remember, understand, solve problems, and make decisions (Bernstein et al., 2012).

English Language Arts. English Language Arts can be divided into five components of learning which are reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language

(Afflerbach et al., 2013).

Growth mindset. Growth mindset has been identified as an individual's belief their talents can be developed and are not strictly innate (Dweck, 2016).

Homework. Homework has been referred to as assignments which require time outside the classroom to reinforce and/or enhance instruction (Watkins & Stevens, 2013).

Human resources frame. Human resources frame has been stated as a way to "see human behavior as resulting from the interplay between heredity and environment" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 119).

Internal validity. Internal validity has been depicted as the relationship between related variables not due to an uncontrolled variable (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015).

Learning environment. Learning environment has been characterized as the "diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which students learn" (*Hidden Curriculum*, 2014, para. 1).

Mathematics. Mathematics is the study of number sense, numerical operations, algebraic thinking and relationships, geometry, measurement, data and statistics (MODESE, 2016).

Objectivity. Objectivity has been expressed as a lack of subjective judgments (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Poverty. Poverty has been referred to as the degree to which an individual does without resources (Payne, 2013).

Reliability. Reliability has been defined as the consistency of scores achieved through testing (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Resources. Resources have been designated as the financial and nonfinancial

supports an individual has access to (Payne, 2013).

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status has been referred to as an individual's or groups' placement in society based on education, occupation, and income (Woolfolk, 2016).

Stress. Stress has been labeled as an internal process that occurs as people try to adjust to events and situations, especially those they perceived to be beyond their coping capacity (Bernstein et al., 2012).

Stressors. Stressors have been expressed as events or situations to which people must adjust (Bernstein et al., 2012).

Social support. Social support has been referred to as the emotional, tangible or informational resources provided by other people; the network of friends and social contacts on whom one can depend for help in dealing with stressors (Bernstein et al., 2012).

Volume of homework. The volume of homework has been expressed as the length and frequency of work assigned (Samm & Jeong, 2013).

Validity. Validity has been defined as the "defensibility of the inferences researchers make from the data collected through the use of an instrument" (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 113).

Summary

In Chapter One, the researcher provided the basic premise of the study related to homework and academic achievement, including the research questions which guides the study. Background information surrounding the key issues of homework and student growth, as academic achievement, were outlined. The purpose of this study was to

examine kindergarten through third-grade teachers' perceptions on homework. The researcher used Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource lens to comprise the conceptual framework. Key terms applicable to the study were provided and defined.

In Chapter Two, the researcher will review literature related and relevant to the main topics of this study, which were homework and student growth. Also, in the next chapter, the researcher will elaborate on other key concepts related to the topic to provide a better understanding of student growth in academic achievement and classroom practices before moving further into the specific details of this particular study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The topic of homework has been a source of controversy and debate for parents, teachers, and students over the years (Valdez et al., 2009; Vatterott, 2009). Advocates of homework have believed completion of homework has allowed students to practice skills and build self-reliance while affording educators with an opportunity to deliver appropriate feedback and support for students (Vatterott, 2009). Homework opponents have feared the use of homework has extended the achievement gap, dulled student motivation for learning and increased feelings of frustration and ineptitude (Vatterott, 2009). It has remained unclear whether students' completion of homework has increased student achievement and at what age homework has provided the most benefit to learning (Bagby & Sulak, 2014). When considering student achievement, low-stakes assessments, such as formative and summative assessments, have been considered a better predictor of true student academic success than high-stakes achievement testing (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). Teachers have often used homework to prepare students for success on these assessments (Challenge Success, 2012).

In this chapter, the theoretical framework developed for this study, focusing on the human resources discipline, will be examined. Literature related to the history of homework, current attitudes of various stakeholders, the effect of homework on the family, and the future of homework will be reviewed and evaluated. Student growth, the school community, and assessment will be addressed under the achievement section of this literature review. The purpose of this study was to determine which aspects of homework, such as environment, available resources, volume, and type, have an impact on student achievement. Literature was chosen based on its relation to the key concepts

of homework and achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The human resources frame, as recognized by Bolman and Deal (2013), focused on what people needed to be successful in organizations, whether in working conditions or in terms of psychological or physical needs. Bolman and Deal (2013) found money, often considered an effective incentive, had not always been the greatest motivator in encouraging individuals to improve in the workplace, while meaning and purpose, as well as social bonding, had created stronger ties. Motivation could be a convincing factor for students' academic achievement, often more so than other cognitive dynamics (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Individuals who had functioned with improved motivation had been shown to be loyal, productive, and innovative (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Interpersonal skills, a characteristic of the human resources frame, had helped individuals develop relationships which could influence the organizational culture in which they live and work (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

The Incentive Theories of Motivation, developed by behaviorists, such as B.F. Skinner (1953), focused on the respondents' behaviors to receiving positive incentives and staying away from negative incentives (Bernstein et al., 2012). Rewards could be used to strengthen expected behaviors; however, if the incentives offered were not age appropriate or were uncomfortable, they were not likely to reinforce the behavior desired (Patrick, Turner, & Strati, 2016). Individuals may be motivated either intrinsically, naturally, or extrinsically with the use of physical reward systems (Patrick et al., 2016). Patrick et al. (2016) suggested if educators designed academic endeavors where students had opportunities for success and were reinforced for their accomplishments, external

reinforcement would not be necessary since feelings of achievement were intrinsically motivating.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) stated a child must have certain needs met before being able to move to the next level on the hierarchy and eventually reach self-actualization (Bernstein et al., 2012). There were five levels on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid (Bernstein et al., 2012). At the bottom of the pyramid were the physiological needs, which included food, water, breathing, shelter, clothing, and sleep (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). The physiological needs of an individual have been found to be the most critical (Bernstein et al., 2012). If these needs were not met not only would the individual be unable to reach any other level, but basic needs would become the major influencing factor (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). Burleson and Thoron (2014) suggested "any efforts that you can make to contribute to these needs will greatly improve a learner's ability to learn and achieve" (p. 3). The other levels of needs were safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Bernstein et al., 2012).

According to Ahmad, Hussain, Batool, Sittar, & Malik (2016), cognitive development focused on the thought processes of remembering, problem-solving, and decision making and was part of the cognitive development theory. The Cognitive Development Theory was the work of Jean Piaget (1936); it had four stages: (a) sensorimotor, zero to two years of age; (b) preoperational, two to seven years of age; (c) concrete operational, seven to 11 years of age; and (d) formal operational, 11-15 years of age (Ahmad et al., 2016). To progress through Piaget's cognitive development stages, a child's basic needs must be met (Ahmad et al., 2016). Piaget believed children progressed through each stage in a sequential order (Bernstein et al., 2012). The speed

for which individuals moved through each of the stages varied for individuals, which explained why some individuals advanced quickly and others seemed behind (Piaget, 1970,).

Harold Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (1983) identified eight intelligences: (a) verbal-linguistic, (b) logical-mathematical, (c) visual-spatial, (d) musical, (e) naturalistic, (f) bodily-kinesthetic, (g) interpersonal, and (h) intrapersonal (Woolfolk, 2016). Even though individuals have possessed more than one of the multiple intelligences, schools typically placed more value on the first three intelligences (Bernstein et al., 2012). Smith and Wrigley (2013) argued the need to rethink the meaning of intelligence so as not to label an individually unfairly. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was never intended to be associated with as learning styles, but rather a way of identifying strengths in learning (Bernstein et al., 2012).

The theories selected complement each other as well as build a foundation for a study on homework and lower elementary students. In this case, the use of homework as a tool for learning outside the traditional classroom and the theoretical findings of Harold Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory served as the catalyst for further research. Bernstein et al. (2012) pointed out the apparent reliance of verbal-linguistics, logical-mathematical, and visual-spatial intelligences for assignments and tasks prepared and presented by educators. Challenge Success (2012), founded at Stanford University, has offered research-based advice in all areas of education to both parents and teachers in relation to what constitutes success inside and outside the classroom. Regarding homework and classroom achievement, Challenge Success (2012) suggested educators design tasks which were developmentally appropriate and engaging for students.

Engaging students in educational learning while utilizing a variety of multiple intelligences may support the alignment of students' academic achievement and student commitment to learning (Bernstein et al., 2012; Challenge Success, 2012).

Homework

Homework has been considered an established tradition in education by many educators (Vatterott, 2009). The amount of work completed by students outside the school day has been consistently controversial (Reilly, 2016). The use of homework by teachers has been one of the few strategies which "crosses the boundary separating school and home, encompassing the two worlds of school and home that all children inhabit" (Vatterott, 2009, p. 158). For some families, the routine of homework had shaped the family and school relationship and had directly influenced the growth of the child (Berryhill & Vennum, 2015). Hampshire et al. (2014) explained the main goal of homework for many students should be to reinforce academic skills. Student and parental fear of incorrectly practicing a new skill have required parents to become monitors of their child's schoolwork completed at home (Hampshire et at., 2014). Vatterott (2009) wrote the purpose of homework has been to determine the progression of learning by providing feedback for the teachers regarding the students learning.

A concern brought forward by Biscoglio and Langer (2011) was the recognition some homework assignments often have not been synchronized with the curriculum or developed as part of the lesson plan by the teacher. Vatterott (2009) stressed the importance of the connection between homework and the work which was occurring in the classroom. Assignments completed at home in which students teach their parents provide a student with the opportunity to independently practice and reinforce skills

taught in the classroom (Constantino, 2016). Learning can be supported through homework in several ways using focus tasks such as pre-learning, checking for understanding, practice, and processing (Vatterott, 2009). A pre-learning activity is one which could provide an opportunity for the teacher to discover what students already knew about an upcoming topic as well as generating interest (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) explained the checking for understanding component has tended to be a generally neglected way for educators to ascertain what students have learned. The traditional use of homework has been the practice stage and has been widely used when memorization skills were to be utilized (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott's (2009) final suggestion on learning using homework has been the processing aspect. Processing has typically required a long-term project which often indicated what had been taught in class (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) recognized the type of learning required by the teacher has often controlled which of the focus tasks was chosen and implemented.

An example of homework as a processing tool would be a math fair project designed and implemented by author, principal and former classroom educator, Todd Nesloney (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016). For this long-term homework tasks, students were encouraged to choose a topic of interest and then indicate six different ways math was related or involved with the topic (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016). Students had two weeks to choose a topic, decide on three visuals, which could range from designing posters, bringing in items, creating items, or any other way they had to visualize their topic and provide the six distinct ways math related to the topic (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016). According to Nesloney and Welcome (2016), at the completion of the two-week time frame, students held a mandatory math fair to present their topics and creations, in

which 69 out of Nesloney's 72 students attended, along with more than 200 adults. Students were engaged in the creativity and individuality of the assignment and as such held a sense of pride and accomplishment at the culmination of the task (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016).

According to Vatterott (2009), "Homework is a classic form of self-regulating learning" (p. 82). However, designing and assigning an assignment for homework would likely be worthless if students do not complete the work (Vatterott, 2009). Fox (2016) argued the view of homework could be different based on the age of the student, the child's ability level, and the socioeconomic background of the family. Whereas the educational attainment level of some parents may impact their degree of involvement in their child's educational pursuits inside or outside the classroom, Benner et al. (2016), suggested children who have reached other levels of achievement may have encouraged their parents to become more involved in their child's educational activities. Vatterott (2009) believed motivation was the greatest issue inhibiting the completion of homework assignments. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) explained there had been a lack of guidelines provided to teachers in designing homework assignments. This lack of appropriate parameters has caused a deficiency of significant and educationally suitable homework activities for the various ages and grade levels in education (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Proponents of homework as a tool for reinforcement of skills have viewed homework as a link to the school, a way to participate in family activities, and the method to a brighter future (Fox, 2016). Homework, if used as a successful tool, must be connected to learning taking place in the classroom and not in isolation (Vatterott, 2009). Hampshire et al. (2014) recognized homework assignments ought to be able to be

completed by students with minimal assistance. Vatterott (2009) determined quality homework can help develop long-term goals of self-discipline, increased intellectual skills and has offered students with the opportunity to become confident in learning and knowledge acquisition. Students who have been afforded quality homework activities have been granted opportunities to practice and process information given in class which in turn has furnished teachers with adequate feedback to allow the educators to check for understanding (Vatterott, 2009).

Vatterott (2009) cautioned against the formation of a homework gap where students who have not completed homework may have fallen further behind their peers who had been able to complete the work. This homework gap could increase the challenge of an achievement gap which has existed between social classes (Vatterott, 2009). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) agreed the homework gap has been apparent with the parents of affluent students who have had access to materials, resources, and tutors to aid in successful completion of homework tasks, while parents of students from lower socioeconomic groups may not have had the economic resources to aid their children in being successful with some homework activities. To aid in the reduction of the homework gap, Vatterott (2009) recommended homework support groups which would allow students to complete school work before or after school. A key function of the successful homework support programs has been the attitudes of the educators and administrators where the focus has been on helping and not punishing students who have not been able to complete the tasks at home (Vatterott, 2009). Reward programs, while having encouraged homework completion, have often failed to explain to students the why of the assignment (Vatterott, 2009). Rewards have worked for some students and

situations but must be carefully thought out if the process is to be successful in the long-term (Vatterott, 2009).

Historical perspective. Historically, the stance of teachers assigning homework to their students and parents indicating support of the assigned homework tasks has seesawed back and forth based on political and social issues of the time (Vatterott, 2009). The traditional role of schools in the United States has been to communicate knowledge and share the cultured values while often mirroring the views of the communities, and more recently representing national and international interest and issues (Mendez, Yoo, & Rury, 2017). Initially, homework consisted of rote memorization of mathematics facts and spelling words, but over the last hundred years homework has changed to more complex tasks and vacillated between anti-homework and pro-homework proponents (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) explained in the early 20th century, homework was considered the cause of "nervous conditions in children, eyestrain, lack of sleep and other conditions" (p. 4). For example, instead of diagnosing a child with attention deficit disorder, the doctor would recommend more outside activity (Vatterott, 2009). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) discussed the negative effects homework might have had on students physically. Excessive homework has been a key component to keeping students from physical activity outside the school setting (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) reported children who have been more physically active generally have had fewer health concerns.

Vatterott (2009) found the idea of less homework was transposed in 1957 when the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik I satellite, and the United States became concerned with education programs which could compete with the Russians. Educational

stakeholders, including parents, were alarmed American children were not prepared for a future in which technology would dominate (Vatterott, 2009). In the 1950s the progressive education of the early 1900's was besieged due to societal concerns of a lack of standards and thoroughness in the public education sector (Mendez et al., 2017). Homework became a method to fast-track information in a time when the Cold War and race relations were building, and the educational distress of American students being left behind was growing (Mendez et al., 2017; Vatterott, 2009). Policies which had been placed on eliminating or reducing homework were overturned, and the pro-homework stance was back in fashion (Vatterott, 2009).

The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War brought homework back into question (Vatterott, 2009). The Johnson administration brought the federal government into the educational field with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as well as the startup of other programs, designed to aid in the education of children such as Head Start, which was hoped to lessen the inequality of children from poorer families (Mendez et al., 2017). Many Americans had felt the tradition of homework was placing too much of a burden on students (Vatterott, 2009). The 1960s and 1970s found other legislation focused on the education of children, including bilingual and handicapped acts, while schools and districts were frequently summoned to deal with the repercussions of economic and social injustice (Mendez et al., 2017). However, the publishing of "A Nation at Risk" in 1983 and "What Works" in 1986 showed deficits in American education and student achievement (Vatterott, 2009). Homework was once again popularized to further student learning. Vatterott (2009) explained the homework trend lasted into the 1990s because of the thrust for higher

standards and concerns about the United States status as a world leader (Mendez et al., 2017).

In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, questions abounded about the accessibility of education to students, public institutions versus voucher plans, as well as the availability of curriculum being presented to all students, specifically African Americans and Latinos (Mendez et al., 2017). Amid popularized books and articles which had declared the hazards of homework, many districts had begun to adopt policies to alleviate or even discount homework for all students (Vatterott, 2009). Arguments from the 1930s and 1960s resurfaced in the 2000s by both anti-homework and pro-homework followers (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) recognized Etta Kralovec and John Buell's 2001 book, *The End of Homework: How Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning* and the 2006 edition of *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* by Alfie Kohn, as well as widespread social media outlets, as tools which have kept the homework debate going strong. Mendez et al. (2017) stated along with the debates over homework have been discussions regarding the use and interpretation of assessments and school district accountability, as well as the federal government's role in the education of American children.

Current attitudes toward homework. Emotions have tended to appear intense for teachers, administrators, and parents when encountering arguments for and against homework (Vatterott, 2009). The debate today has been compounded by the diversity of the attitudes in relation to the value of homework (Vatterott, 2009). Berryhill and Vennum (2015) found parental involvement in education-centered activities has had a positive impact on the social-emotional health of children. Unfortunately, according to

Whitaker and Fiore (2001), there have been a substantial number of parents who have doubted school leaders and educators have valued parent involvement, nor viewed their involvement as important. Vatterott (2009) supported this belief by stating there have been trust issues between parents and teachers in relation to homework, often based on the past experiences of the parents.

Parental attitudes. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) expressed concern parents may have lost sight of the balance in the home. The equilibrium between family, workplace, school work, and community life may have been compromised by today's parents (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Pressman et al. (2015) found many parents have struggled in balancing homework with extracurricular activities while other parents have struggled in assisting the completion of their children's homework. Fox (2016) found some parents desired additional homework to occupy their children in a worthwhile manner and as a means to rely less on video games or television. High-achieving students who may have wished for additional time in extracurricular activities or independent studies, but experienced challenging assignments at home, found those assignments to be a source of grievance with their parents (Samm & Jeong, 2013). Some parents have complained about the stress and disruptions to family life homework has brought (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) noted those same parents have also often expressed concern about the ability of their child to compete for college entry. If the child has been resistant to completing homework, whether the assignment was too long or too difficult, disharmony in the home may have been present (Bagby & Sulak, 2014). Another disconnect between parents and schools in respect to homework has been when homework assignments have not been thoroughly covered in class and parents, who are already over-worked, have

found themselves teaching a concept rather than monitoring the completion of an assignment (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

In some situations, parents have not been made familiar with the teachers' expectations or informed about their specific role in assisting the child with homework tasks (Vatterott, 2009). Carr (2013) specified for homework practices to be effective, parent communication must be considered. One way to communicate with parents, as explained by Whitaker and Fiore (2001), has been to discuss expectations and affirm parents of their importance in the education process, specifically in reading to their young children. Reinhart et al. (2016) suggested "educating parents on the importance of meaningful inquiry and discourse may also improve science learning for young children" (p. 12). Hampshire et al. (2014) warned many parents might not have knowledge of curriculum and skills, and thus may not be able to assist their children with homework, especially as the students reach their junior and senior years in high school. According to Hampshire et al. (2014), the role of the parent, rather than having taught the homework, should have been in monitoring completion of assignments. Considering student self-management of homework and levels of parental support, Hampshire et al. (2014) have suggested providing parents with an understanding of what levels of support could be needed by the child, as well as the teacher expectations for the homework tasks.

The level of educational experience the parent has sometimes has been a factor in the completion of assignments at home (Benner et al., 2016). Children, whose parents have been academically prepared to assist their children with homework, have been more likely to have parents who may have been more involved with the homework assignment of their children (Pressman et al., 2015). However, Pressman et al. (2015) contended

parental support from parents could have been an advantage for some children, yet an impairment to others. Most parents have recognized traditional paper-based homework, yet may have felt reluctance to help their child when faced with online homework assignments (Hampshire et al., 2014). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) explained rising resentment toward homework might have come from a gap in parents' knowledge of what has been taught in schools and the nightly arguments with children to complete the assignment which may have ensued. Parents whose children have struggled with academics may have felt a greater burden to be involved with homework assignments (Pressman et al., 2015). For other students, who may have found a level of homework independence, parents have been able to remove support (Hampshire et al., 2014). When educators have proposed guidance to families through information, ideas, and activities such as family math, reading, and science nights, these activities often have provided parents with much needed and often desired help (Richardson, Miller, Richardson, & Sacks, 2015). Whitaker and Fiore (2001) stated when parents have become involved in the school in some function, then they have better appreciation of what has occurred at school on a regular basis.

Parental involvement has been an influence on homework as it has often been the parent who has provided support to the student for homework completion (Bagby & Sulak, 2014). Regrettably, some parents have felt annoyed by their required involvement and with this resentment have had feelings of guilt and fear they may be judged as bad parents (Vatterott, 2009). Constantino (2016) identified educators and administrators as having made speculations about parents' lack of involvement or engagement with their child's education as apathy toward the school system and their child's learning. Benner

et al. (2016) stated there are two types of parental involvement, home-based, and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement, such as parent monitoring of homework and the reinforcement of school learning through education enrichment tasks, has been more difficult to direct and view due to the very nature of the environment (Benner et al., 2016). School-based involvement has provided parents the opportunity to be involved in activities and functions in the school atmosphere, such as parent-teacher meetings, conferences, and volunteer work (Benner et al., 2016). The age of the student, their ability levels, the educational status of the parent, and time available for the parent could cause differences in the level of involvement of the parent (Vatterott, 2009). Pressman et al. (2015) have cautioned inordinate amounts of parental involvement or excessive assistance in the correction of homework assignments could delay a teacher from recognizing an academic need for the child.

Fox (2016) conducted a study of six families living in low-income subsidized housing. Through the study, Fox (2016) found students in participating families completed homework in which information about the assignment was provided. The mothers, the main adult participants, motivated their children to sit together within the home environment, and the work was considered a family activity (Fox, 2016). The routine of homework, especially when given in curriculum areas, was appreciated by the participants who also considered homework something siblings could do together (Fox, 2016). In many instances, the mothers requested additional homework for their children and utilized the work to communicate with their children (Fox, 2016). Ultimately, the mothers in the study felt the homework was a way to learn about the school's curriculum and was a gauge of their child's learning progression (Fox, 2016).

Vatterott (2009) considered most parents have not been trained educators and may not value homework in the manner teachers do. Parents should not be expected to develop, implement, adapt or provide accommodations for their children and their homework assignments (Hampshire et al., 2014). Parents who have expressed concerns about homework have feared a loss of leisure time, increased stress, and possible negative effects on the overall health of their children (Vatterott, 2009). Excessive homework, according to parents, has taken away the opportunity for children to be children and to experience unstructured play time, family time, and downtime (Vatterott, 2009). Some parents have disagreed with the philosophy homework teaches responsibility (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). They have felt a lack of homework could allow for parents to teach family-related responsibility (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

According to Vatterott (2009), "Parents have the right to control their child's time outside school" (p. 31). While parents have often been advised to stay positive, rarely have parents been afforded the ability to question the amount and quality of a homework assignment (Vatterott, 2009). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) encouraged parents to seek allies to foster change with homework policies. Vatterott (2009) acknowledged technology has allowed parents to share homework struggles immediately, as well as taken away the feelings of isolation many parents have felt when dealing with homework challenges. Buell (2004) has argued for homework reform to allow parents more time to develop the aspects of their children's character education they have deemed important. With all the arguments for and against homework, it would be challenging for a consortium of parents to reach a consensus regarding the value of homework (Vatterott, 2009).

Student attitudes. Students' attitudes directed to homework assignments have varied as well (Xu, 2013). Many students have decided whether to even try a homework assignment centered on their feelings about the assigned work (Vatterott, 2009). Buell (2004) provided the opinion if students had high-quality teachers who had made effective use of the time spent in class, students would have been more likely to work hard outside class. When students have had an assignment, which was too difficult to understand or has proved too challenging, they should have been able to contact the teacher without fear of penalty (Vatterott, 2010). For some students, the feelings of competency related to a homework task have stemmed from the amount of work assigned (Vatterott, 2010). In a mixed-methods research project by Samm and Jeong (2013), 584 parents and middle school students representing grades six, seven, and eight, were surveyed regarding current homework practices. There were several themes which became apparent through the data analysis, including the following points: (a) mathematics homework was assigned daily, (b) homework in grade six was due the following day, (c) homework tasks in grades seven and eight were not due the following day, (d) very few teachers assigned homework activities on Fridays, and (e) the four core subjects (mathematics, language arts, science and social studies) were never assigned on the same days (Samm & Jeong, 2013). It was also discovered students were more motivated to complete assignments when the teacher provided meaningful feedback, clear explanations for the tasks, and reasonable alternatives to the assigned task (Samm & Jeong, 2013). In other instances, students have procrastinated and provided incomplete work after having run out of time on completing a homework activity assigned outside of school (Vatterott, 2010). Carr (2013) argued students must feel competent in their academic abilities when completing

work outside of school.

Along with procrastination in completing homework assignments, Hampshire et al. (2014) found some students experienced intense competition for their time with other school-related activities which held a higher interest for them. After school hours have frequently been full of many interests for students (Vatterott, 2009). Not only have there been pursuits outside the home which have served as distractions for students, but there may also have been numerous interfering factors within the home environment which have kept students from completing homework (Hampshire et al., 2014). Xu (2013) wrote of the concern students have encountered with multiple homework challenges occurring at the same time. Due to the various pastimes, many students have faced outside the classroom, Carr (2013) recommended homework should not have taken up an unnecessary amount of time, yet should have encouraged the students to think.

Homework, in the traditional sense, has required students to complete assigned tasks or face possible punishment (Vatterott, 2014). Tasks which checked for understanding and had served as a form of practice, especially of complicated skills, may have provided students with a sense of ownership in their work (Vatterott, 2014). Buell (2004) agreed students should have had time for independent work, however, the practice of the complex skills should have taken place in the school environment, which would have allowed all students equal access, both to educators and to a secure location for study. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) stated traditional homework has often required students to study for exams, yet many students may never have been shown how to study for an exam. Carr (2013) addressed the concern of students and independent work completed at home by stating students needed to be educated in the skills of evaluation

and self-reflection on how to approach a task. However, even with the knowledge of those skills, students should have been able to easily make a connection between work assigned for outside the classroom and the learning which has occurred inside the classroom (Vatterott, 2009).

While there have been many students who, when they have felt a link between the content and the assignment, have been more motivated (Carr, 2013), other students have shown a lack of motivation because the assignment had not been perceived as essential (Vatterott, 2009). Student motivation to complete homework tasks may be different than the motivation to complete work at school (Katz, Kaplan, & Gueta, 2009). Katz et al. (2009) found motivational processes for students were more diverse in academic assignments outside school than in the classroom. The two main competitors in the motivation of students, according to Katz et al. (2009), were the apprehensions over supervision of homework by a parent or no one and the competition of student preferred endeavors after school hours. Jenson (2013) stated students might have been unmotivated because they have experienced a loss of hope and optimism. Students without a growth mindset may have felt their effort had not been enough, yet, according to Jenson (2013), strong educators have taught effort every day. Dr. Carol Dweck (2016), the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, has completed extensive research on growth mindset, which she has defined as an individual's belief his or her talent can be developed and is not strictly innate.

There have been many concerns as to the academic harm the practice of assigned homework may have caused to students (Hampshire et al., 2014; Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) cautioned homework could be damaging if a student has misunderstood

a concept and the practice had reinforced the misconceptions. Another concern has been when parents, or other adults, had helped or even completed homework, which has given the teacher the misguided impression the student had understood a concept when they truly had not (Vatterott, 2009). Hampshire et al. (2014) stated students who tended to rush through homework assignments or did not check their work had been more likely not to gain maximum success. Students who had chosen not to complete homework tasks may have faced an array of detrimental consequences, such as a shaky foundation of knowledge, skills, and learning (Vatterott, 2009). An inability to read well and a lack of deep understanding of a concept have been other potential losses students who had chosen to not complete homework may have encountered (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) indicated some students might have needed more time to process and contemplate information. To be successful working independently on homework, students who have tended to struggle academically, may need assignments which have fewer questions, problems with fewer steps, and possibly not as much reading involved (Vatterott, 2009).

Even with academic concerns and warnings associated with homework tasks, numerous benefits have also been acknowledged. Bagby and Sulak (2014) felt students who had been successful with lower level skills practiced at home had been better able to participate in higher level thinking skills in the classroom due to better utilization of their working memory skills. Students who had recognized homework completion prepared them for classroom participation had often found their grades improving (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). Younger students have been shown to be more successful with shorter assignments (Bagby & Sulak, 2014) and students who felt competent in their learning had been more likely to complete homework tasks (Vatterott, 2009). In later research,

Vatterott (2014) stated if educators wanted "students to take charge of their learning, we must trust their ability to do so" (p. 42). Students who have stepped forward and gained ownership of learning have been found to be engaged, productive, and self-reflective (Vatterott, 2014). Open communication between students and their teachers had occurred when students appreciated learning as a lifelong process and accepted homework was not a final assessment (Vatterott, 2014).

Teacher attitudes. Educators have frequently been reminded of their responsibility to serve students and their families within the educational realm (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016). The two-way conversation between students and teachers may have stemmed from constructive feedback from the teacher (Vatterott, 2009). Teachers have been described by some parents as being more organized when they had provided feedback on homework assignments (Fox, 2016). It could have been the encouraging or discouraging feedback from an educator which could have led a student to have either chosen to complete homework or not (Vatterott, 2009). For many families, when a teacher has elected to provide no feedback, homework has been considered a poor use of the student's time and an obstruction to improvement (Fox, 2016). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) observed it has often been the teacher who had assigned homework who has complained about the time-consuming nature of providing feedback for the tasks.

Parents who have expressed concern over assisting their children with academic homework tasks at home expressed the need for teacher input and support on the assignment (Fox, 2016). Many individuals have believed teachers have had an obligation to extend learning outside the classroom environment (Vatterott, 2009). There have been teachers who have claimed assigning homework has helped to keep children out of

trouble and away from the influences of television and video games (Vatterott, 2009). Other teachers have considered the assigning of homework tasks an issue of control and convenience (Vatterott, 2009). Some teachers who have chosen not to assign tasks to be completed at home may have viewed homework as too demanding due to the advanced preparation, planning, grading, checking and feedback required by the educator (Hampshire et al., 2014).

Just as many students and parents have experienced frustration with assigned homework, teachers have felt the pressures to meet and to exceed standards set forth by federal guidelines, and as a result have used homework as a tool to achieve success in some instances (Vatterott, 2009). For some educators, assigning activities to be completed at home has been an attempt to increase learning time and to more fully develop learning skills (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) recognized some teacher frustration had also stemmed from the knowledge generally the students who needed more learning time had been those students less likely to complete homework tasks. Hampshire et al. (2014) suggested homework tasks may have been more effective if teachers had designed a homework policy which had set in place individuals involved and what the role of each person would be. Many educators have expected parents to participate in the outside education of their children; in some cases, this resulted in assignments which were too difficult for students to complete and the responsibility fell to parents to finish the task (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Teachers who have tried to learn and understand the demands and challenges of the students, academically and within the home environment, have been more likely to design suitable and effective homework assignments (Carr, 2013; Voorhees, 2011).

High-quality educators have determined the academic differences in their students and as a result have differentiated homework tasks in the areas of literacy (Voorhees, 2011) and access of materials within the home (Hampshire et al., 2014). Teachers have encouraged students to complete homework using planners or agendas (Carr, 2013), as well as by having created assignments which have had a purpose, provided interest to the students, and provided an opportunity for meaningful feedback (Xu, 2013). The use of research-based practices has been an additional method to enhance the efficacy of homework (Carr, 2013). Carr (2013) stated "It is the teacher's responsibility to create effective homework assignments and to provide students and parents with the tools necessary for the process to be as successful as possible" (p. 179). The process of establishing a classroom of learners can be achieved when teachers have applied research-based practices and created effective homework assignments which in turn can encourage students to believe in the significance of the work and of themselves (Carr, 2013).

Effect of homework on families. Andrews (2015) wrote, "It is the child who makes us who we are: teachers and parents" (p. 130). Nesloney and Welcome (2016) relayed a comment from a parent who stated they, the parents, knew they were to be their children's first teacher; yet they did not always take advantage of the teachable moments even though the parents felt it was their responsibility. Families have been recognized as prominent members of the child's learning team and have deserved to be appreciated and valued (Constantino, 2016). Teachers have also expressed a willingness and passion for communicating information to the students they educate (Constantino, 2016). Homework has afforded bridges to home and school, yet the conventional use of homework may not be in alignment with the family structures of today's society (Vatterott, 2009). Not only

have family structures changed, but the way the families communicate, the types of jobs, job availability and locations, and ultimately, the family's educational needs have changed as well (Constantino, 2016). Vatterott (2009) continued to press the importance of educators to understand and respect the intricacy and values of each family represented, particularly when desiring to put homework into practice. Andrews (2015) stated all who have contact or interaction with a student shape their perspective of the child. When each viewpoint, regarding educators and parents, has been considered true and not as one being right and one being wrong, Andrews (2015) felt more ideas and options would be accessible for students to be successful in their education.

Family structures. Crosnoe and Benner (2012) discovered American parents had been required to be exceedingly active in schools and to promote educational experiences while at home, more so than compared to other countries. Families in the United States, beginning in the initial stages of educational history, have desired education to move ahead (Labaree, 2012). In the 1950s students completed homework because they were instructed to by their parents (Vatterott, 2009). This mindset changed in the 1960s when families and society values began to diversify with the "do your own thing generation" (Vatterott, 2009, p. 27). Alternative family configurations have become more common due to changes in marriage, increased cohabitation and divorce, as well as blended families and grandparents rearing grandchildren (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012; Vatterott, 2009).

The variation and miscellany of family structures, values, and priorities have made the practice of homework complex (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) stated a few of today's parents do not have a sense of authority in place as part of the family structure

thus allowing children to learn to take control. For most families, however, the parents have been in charge but have allowed input from their children (Vatterott, 2009). Pressman et al. (2015) found "when parents are overly negative or controlling, children tend to be lower achieving" (p. 299). Vatterott's (2009) studies on families revealed conventional parents felt children had been allowed to be in control and everything, including homework, was negotiable.

Parents from the working class as well as those from poverty situations have often felt they could not measure up to the expectations of school personnel (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012). Vatterott (2009) stressed family values and school values have often conflicted. In some circumstances, students may have had to provide care for siblings or parents who could not care for themselves, which may have interfered with completion of school work (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Crosnoe and Benner (2012) stated growing up in today's challenging family structures could impede children's academic growth. Some students had parents who were educated and possessed the technological resources necessary to progress while others were left unaided or unsupported in homes. This in part was due to parents working numerous jobs, or because this situation did not provide the child with the same technological resources of their peers (Carr, 2013).

Vatterott (2009) found educators need to be careful not to place such a focus on learning they lose sight of the importance of family life on the student. For this reason, when assigning tasks to complete at home, teachers should be encouraged to become flexible regarding family priorities (Xu, 2013). Educators have needed to be careful not to place such a focus on learning they lose sight of family life's importance on the student and as such have needed to become flexible regarding family priorities (Vatterott, 2009).

Andrews (2015) pointed out if there is a change in one area, home or school, the impact may be felt in all areas. Crosnoe and Benner (2012) cautioned involvement between families and schools was likely to be mismatched until the school system changed regarding the variations which have appeared in family dynamics. One way to help span the gap between families and schools has been to provide information to all stakeholders regarding the expectations of each member and ultimately how the student will benefit (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012). Andrews (2015) affirmed, "we can bring in our expertise and knowledge without reducing the family's expertise and knowledge" (p. 137). When families and schools have worked together, parents have found a place to encourage their children, and schools have found support in the home arena (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012).

Krueger et al. (2015) stated children in the United States live in increasingly diverse family configurations. The vast changes in family structures may have had disadvantageous effects on children, such as increased poverty rates, increased income inequality, and negative impacts on the growth and development of children. Haskins (2015) attributed the danger of family composition changes to a decline in marriage rates, specifically in regard to individuals with moderate education and minorities, and an increase in the number of children born to unmarried females. Unfortunately, children in the United States have frequently been born into family situations which have been associated with poor well-being for the child (Krueger et al., 2015). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) indicated single-parent families have often been led by single mothers with a sizable percentage living in poverty. Single parent families led by single fathers have often been less disadvantaged than even single mother families (Krueger et al., 2015). Whether led by a single mother or a single father, adults who have been unpartnered tend

to have had fewer resources and those resources have often been carefully allocated for the children (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012).

Cohabiting families have been associated with instability which has been a source of negative outcomes for children (Manning, 2015). Cohabiting family structures have been correlated with younger parents who often were not prepared for parenting and more likely to separate from their partners (Krueger et al., 2015). Krueger et al. (2015) found there had been a higher diagnosis of learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder when children had lived within any family structure where the couple was non-married. Children in family structures with cohabiting single mothers and grandparent-led families "missed 1.23 to 1.59 times as many days of school per year as children in married-couple families" (Krueger et al. 2015, p. 4). In-home support from grandparents may have figured highly in single parent or cohabiting families, yet their company has not changed the harmful results for children (Krueger et al., 2015). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) argued in favor of grandparents who were active participants in their grandchildren's lives suggesting they served as encouraging role models. Inter-generational family structures may have been the opportunity for grandparents to have helped address academic concerns and to have utilized the knowledge, skills, and experience for their grandchildren (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Children of divorced families and international families have also brought many challenges to the education arena (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012; Vatterott, 2009). Divorced parents have often had concerns about the education of their child and have struggled with varying work schedules (Vatterott, 2009). Many parents who were noncustodial

have realized the tasks of having to balance numerous homework assignments and spend limited time with their children (Vatterott, 2009). Not only have American family structures impacted the education of their children, but immigrant families also have encountered challenges (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012). Language barriers and cultural misunderstandings may have impacted international families as they have tackled the American school system, assessments, homework, and expectations of parental involvement (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012). Even with the many questions which have resulted from family structures having involved children and their involvement in the educational setting, Andrews (2015) insisted the more people, family members, and school personnel, who have worked on the trials involved in education the more solutions which may have been produced.

Environment. Samm and Jeong (2013) acknowledged homework assignments were generally given at school with the expectation to be completed at home. Due to the very nature of homework, it had become imperative educators considered the home environment, which had often been unbalanced for students (Carr, 2013). Vatterott (2009) maintained many teachers had consistently assigned the same homework to all students yet failed students, despite the income inequities of the students' families, for not finishing the homework. Teachers have been "in essence punishing them for lack of an adequate environment in which to do homework" (Vatterott, 2009, p. 2). Watkins and Stevens (2013) found parents had frequently worked evening shifts or did not have the background necessary to provide useful assistance with the result of limited support at home. Xu (2013) discovered five challenges related to homework completion and the home environment. The five challenges were (a) arranging the environment, (b)

managing time, (c) handling distractions, (d) monitoring motivation, and (e) controlling emotion (Xu, 2013).

Arranging the environment dealt with providing a quiet area for study to allow for minimum distractions (Xu, 2013). Managing time encompassed scheduling a regular time to complete homework, learning how to pace the workload, and setting priorities (Xu, 2013). Handling distractions for the students included the limiting of unrelated activities, as well as learning to limit awareness to possible interruptions (Xu, 2013). Increased motivation stemmed from assignments which students found relevant, interesting and engaging (Xu, 2013). Controlling emotion has enabled students, with assistance of adults, to comprehend how to deal with frustration, tiredness, and other powerful emotions (Xu, 2013). Xu (2013) recognized the importance of parents and teachers working together to develop a routine which would work for the student for working in the home.

In a study conducted by Fox (2016), the home environment was not considered a major issue in the completion of homework. Conducted in North Carolina, six families in a low-income housing community were interviewed at either an after-school program site or on a home visit (Fox, 2016). The ages and number of children, as well as homework related questions, were the key talking points (Fox, 2016). In all six cases there were no quiet settings in the home for homework to be completed (Fox, 2016). "In every case homework was accomplished in a family or group area" (Fox, 2016, p. 229). The families considered homework to be a family activity and often requested additional tasks (Fox, 2016).

With an attempt to encourage science learning in the home environment, Reinhart

et al. (2016) conducted a study promoting take home science activity packs. Initially designed to be a self-reporting study, insufficient data collection caused the study to develop a second phase, a video case phase (Reinhart et al., 2016). Families in six classrooms, ranging from kindergarten through third grade, had been invited to complete a survey following an academic year of receiving science take-home packets provided by the teacher (Reinhart et al., 2016). The take-home packets, sent home once a quarter, included newsletters, materials for a science activity and a journal sheet. Only 25% of families returned the surveys which necessitated the need for additional data using the video case phase (Reinhart et al., 2016). Families, enlisted at a local science center and recruited for the video case phase, were given a gift certificate to the science center for their participation (Reinhart et al., 2016). Reinhart et al. (2016) noted the video case phase participants had not completed the survey. For the video case phase, the family was asked to view the activity pack and complete the activities while being filmed (Reinhart et al., 2016). Through this research, Reinhart et al. (2016) discovered mothers or stepmothers were most likely to be participants, and 96% of the families involved felt science interest had been increased within the home. The video cases led the researchers to the conclusion many families did not allow children adequate thinking time, an average of 2.02 seconds, while many researchers had suggested at least five seconds of response time (Reinhart et al., 2016).

When the home environment had undergone a change, either in family dynamics or a physical move by the family, during a school year, academic achievement results could signify a lower growth in reading (Grigg, 2012). Grigg (2012) conducted a case study on school enrollment changes and the impact of these changes on student

achievement. Students who had enrolled after the start of the year had been considered an unknown entity, by educators, which had taken away from instructional time to conduct evaluations (Grigg, 2012). The changing of schools which had occurred due to a student's family relocating may have been detrimental in academic endeavors, yet the adjustments which had required students to transfer to other buildings, such as elementary school to middle school may have also proven disadvantageous (Grigg, 2012). When students had a change in environment, the disruption it had caused may have resulted in a diversion of learning (Grigg, 2012). Regardless of the environment in which a student lives, a justifiable question related to homework should be how can educators improve homework's quality to encourage its completion (Voorhees, 2011)?

Socioeconomic factors. Socioeconomic status can be defined as the position of an individual within a societal context with variables such as education, occupation, and income often used to categorize individuals or groups (Woolfolk, 2016). Students whose families came from a lower socioeconomic setting or who come from disadvantaged areas may have found it problematic to complete homework for a multitude of reasons (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The absence of available resources, limited vocabulary, and parental attitudes toward education could have influenced how homework tasks have been perceived and either completed or avoided (Payne, 2013). Disadvantaged students, who have been challenged with homework devoid of the necessary resources and support to adequately complete the assignments, may not experience the same level of success as their more advantaged classmates (Payne, 2013).

The potential of homework to cause the achievement gap between affluent students and students from lower socioeconomic groups to continue to expand may also

have intensified differences in class (Vatterott, 2016). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) noted parents from privileged backgrounds have been more likely to develop power especially over-ruling school boards and may also have viewed homework as a way for their child to get ahead in the academic realm. The separation of the groups who represent the haves from the have-nots may have affected learning (Vatterott, 2016). Families with a higher socioeconomic status have been able to purchase books, technology, private lessons and a myriad of additional enrichment activities to help their children learn and grow (Duncan, Magnuson, & Murnane, 2016). The benefits of the haves may have allowed their children to rise beyond fellow classmates who may not have had the benefits of financial resources (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Vatterott (2009) expressed completing homework assignments may have assisted children of privilege to experience academic achievement, but it has likewise allowed children "less privileged to fail academically" (p. 38). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) suggested children from middle-class families have also faced educational challenges as school environments have become highly pressured and alienating to students. Students from lower socioeconomic classes have tended to have obstacles when it has come to completing homework (Vatterott, 2009). Many children from low-income families have been needed to assist their families with after-school activities such as babysitting, food preparations, laundry, or cleaning (Vatterott, 2009). In a society where education has been considered the key to moving up in the metaphorical world the educational system has often replicated social inequalities rather than disabling them (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Oftentimes low socioeconomic families have been less likely to acknowledge or

understand the value of the school environment (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). This mindset may hinder or cause dissonance between the home and school which could negatively impact the education of the child (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Poverty could have detrimental effects on academic achievement (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Educators have had the overwhelming task of attempting to "mitigate some of the negative aspects of poverty" (Jenson, 2013, p. 24). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) claimed once students trusted teachers genuinely cared for their total well-being, including their families, they were more willing to make the required adjustments for learning. Payne (2013) agreed the crucial component to achievement for students from low socioeconomic situations was in forming relationships. Thus, what occurred in the classroom could directly impact how the school communicated with the community (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

When school district personnel have chosen to formulate homework policies which are fair-minded for all involved, one of the greatest challenges has been accommodating economic diversity of the families (Vatterott, 2009). Technological advances have caused inequalities between families in the financial realm to increase exponentially such as when families who have had the financial resources to provide for all aspects of their children's education and families who have had no access to technological resources for their children for either homework completion or educational enrichment (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Poverty has been a focus of the socioeconomic realm for many years (Payne, 2013). Payne (2013) studied poverty as two groups: generational and situational. Individuals in generational poverty had lived in poverty for at least two generations (Payne, 2013). Families who had lived through situational poverty have had a temporary lack of resources due to an event, such as divorce, death of

a family member, or illness (Payne, 2013). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) viewed poverty as "the product of a system that employs people only so long as they produce profit" (p. 38). According to Lacour and Tissington (2011), families from impoverished neighborhoods may not have valued education possibly due to a lack of understanding. This lack of educational value may have led to unprepared students (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) disagreed and explained many families undergo times of poverty yet have managed to provide for their children by keeping them safe and focused on an education.

The effects of living in poverty can be manifested many ways in a student's life. For example, insufficient nutrition and housing, ill-fitting clothing and shoes with holes, and moving homes and schools often can all contribute to a negative impact on a student's performance, but there are also less noticeable signs which can impact relationships and confidence (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Payne (2013) defined poverty as the "extent to which an individual does without resources" (p. 7). Smith and Wrigley (2013) suggested poverty as being a material issue but having non-material consequences. The 2015 United States Census Bureau Population Report reported 43.1 million people lived below the poverty level which was 13.5% of the total population (Proctor, Semega, & Kollar, 2016). Furthermore, Proctor et al. (2016) reported children represented 23.1% of the total population and 33.6% of people living in poverty. There were 14 million children, or 19.2%, under the age of 18 living in poverty and 21%, or 4.9 million under the age of six (Proctor et al., 2016).

There were 4.8 million, or 9.8% related children from married couple families considered to be living in poverty according to the 2015 United States Census Bureau

Population Report (Proctor et al., 2016). For related children who lived in families with a female head of household, 42.6%, or 7.9 million were living in poverty (Proctor et al., 2016). Male head of household families consisted of 1.3 million, or 25.9% of children living in poverty (Proctor et al., 2016). Related children have been referred to as children under the age of 18 who were related by birth, adoption, or marriage to the householder (Proctor et al., 2016). In 2015, the poverty breakdown by race included two million Asians, 10 million blacks, 12 million Hispanics and 28 million whites (Proctor et al., 2016). Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 61.4% of the total population and 41.2% of people in poverty in the United States (Proctor et al., 2015).

To aid children who had been identified as most in need, federal guidelines have been established and revised each year (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016). The recommendations were based on the Federal Income Poverty guidelines and had been figured by the size of the household (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016). In 2016-2017, the guidelines for free meal and milk, as well as reduced-price meals, were obtained by multiplying the 2016 Federal Income Poverty guidelines by a factor of 1.30 for free meals and 1.85 for reduced meals before being rounded up to the nearest dollar (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016). Income calculations which had been decided upon annually were divided by 12; twice monthly calculations were divided by 24; when income was received every two weeks the annual income was divided by 26; and when the income was weekly, the annual income was divided by 52 (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016). In 2016, a family income for a four-person household in the United States at poverty level was $24,300 (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016).

Smyth and Wrigley (2013) listed three levels of blame occurring outside the

school environment which have frequently contributed to students' academic struggles. At the micro, or individual level, blame for low academic success has been placed on the student (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The parents have been the focus of the criticism for poor academic achievement at the meso level, while the larger scale has placed accountability for academic underachievement on the neighborhood (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Smith and Wrigley (2013) revealed parents have frequently been held responsible for areas beyond their control, such as "transmitting the wrong genes, using the wrong kind of language in the home, for failing to stimulate children, for their supposed indifference to education, a failure to establish discipline in the home, a lack of aspirations and so on" (p. 57). Many individuals and families who had lived in poverty situations had often been regarded by other individuals and the media contemptuously or as if they were invisible. (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). There have been societal pushes to deny the existence of poverty or to place the blame of poverty on lifestyle choices (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Poverty impacts human interactions and the sense of self-esteem both in current dealings and in how the future is viewed (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) stated additional instruction by educational institutions may have raised the educational level of society but social inequality had not been reduced.

Future of homework. The increased demands of a high-technology global economy have amplified the need for professionals within the realm of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (DeJarnette, 2012). Technological improvements and changes have required a higher skill set for many occupations which in turn has placed greater demands on the educational system of the United States (DeJarnette, 2012). The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2017) has encouraged

educational leaders to assist in providing all learners with skills to become successful as a member of the future workforce and communities. Learning occuring inside and outside the educational arena may provide a secure foundation for future success (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2017). For many teachers, the concept of a flipped classroom has become an attractive way to incorporate learning at home and school especially with the availability of internet resources (Herreid & Schiller, 2013).

21st Century Learning. It has been the belief of the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2016) that students who have been more actively engaged in the learning process have been better prepared to become productive in a global society. Soule and Warrick (2015) identified challenges students in the future may face as "higher knowledge, skills, imagination, fortitude and educational excellence for all as never before" (p. 178). A framework by Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2016) was created to identify and define the skills and areas of expertise needed for students to succeed. The key subjects considered important have been English in reading or English language arts, world languages, art, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government, and civics, as well as interdisciplinary themes of global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). Other areas of importance to future members of a global society have been classified as learning and innovation skills, life and career skills and information, and media and technology skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015).

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2016) suggested learning and innovation have separated students from those who are prepared for complex living and

those who are not. Students who have built a solid foundation in learning and innovation skills have possessed creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2016). In life and career skills, students have had a need for flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015, 2016). DeJarnette (2012) explained the goal of the Partnership for 21st Century Learning was to create preparedness in all students. To Soule and Warrick (2015), the Partnership for 21st Century Learning represented a strong solution for the ways to incorporate assorted styles and means of learning for the future demands of society.

Flipped classrooms. In a flipped classroom, homework and investigations occurred in the classroom while the preparation work had occurred in the home through the use of videos, PowerPoint presentations, and readings (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). Schmidt and Ralph (2016) reiterated a flipped classroom has not eliminated the need for a classroom teacher or the end of lectures. Herreid and Schiller (2013) explained homework would be better used in the actual classroom with the guidance of a teacher while listening to lectures, watching videos, or reading informational texts would be better suited at home. Schmidt and Ralph (2016) agreed flipped classrooms have provided students with in-class support. Herreid and Schiller (2013) stated the more prepared a student had been, then the more learning could occur.

When school district personnel have decided to pursue the flipped classroom model, a key concern has been the availability of home computers and other technology resources (Fulton, 2012; Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). Fulton (2012) discussed a possible

solution to the lack of internet by providing lessons on a compact disk or jump drive. The use of video lessons and lectures has been a widespread practice for teachers utilizing a flipped classroom (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). In many instances, students have been required to view the video lessons prior to class and have been prepared to demonstrate understanding by completing homework during class time (Fulton, 2012). Some schools have created a video library of lessons and have allowed students to view lessons from other teachers as well as their own (Fulton, 2012). A necessary component of the video lesson has been identified as interaction or active engagement to encourage students and capture their attention (Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). Just as with traditional homework completed at home, students in flipped classrooms may have had strong parental support and educated parents who may have helped with understanding the video lessons while others may have had parents unable to provide assistance with the assignment (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016).

Utilization of flipped classrooms has resulted in positives and negatives just as with conventional homework (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012). Positive outcomes of flipped classrooms have been recognized as having students more actively engaged in learning and involved with active research (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). Students have had the opportunity to take more responsibility for their learning and have considered the teacher as a mentor and coach (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012). Flipped classrooms have promoted thinking inside and outside the classroom environment and have been successful for students who must miss school due to extracurricular activities or illness (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). Bergmann and Waddell (2012) have recommended math, science, and foreign languages as the subjects best suited for flipped classrooms for older

students and grammar and math for younger students.

There were also negatives associated with flipped classrooms (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012). One of the more widely agreed upon concerns with flipped classrooms has been the lack of broadband internet in all areas, especially rural and poverty communities, which has left many students unable to participate (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012). Another identified concern was if the use of technology were to become mandatory, the widening of the economic achievement gap may allow affluent students with access to continue to grow while students without access may fall further behind due to lack of instruction (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012). Students with access to the video lessons may be resistant due to the request to become exposed to subject matter at home before discussing at school (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). Students who have watched the videos have experienced no collaboration or inquiry with others (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012).

For the teachers to have experienced success with the in-class activities, they have had to carefully provide tailored work for the students (Herreid & Schiller, 2013). Parents have had adjustment concerns as well since the utilization of flipped classrooms was different from their own school experiences (Fulton, 2012). In response to the usefulness of flipped classrooms, Bergmann and Waddell (2012) responded, “We need to adjust the way we think about education, not just the way it looks” (p. 7). Whether a flipped classroom or a traditional classroom, the future of education will not be in how the information is presented but rather, how students have been taught to think with the information (Bergmann & Waddell, 2012).

Achievement

Haskins et al. (2012) recognized two problems with the American literary crisis. First, the typical American student had not possessed the skills able to equal international students (Haskins et al., 2012). The second concern has been the enlarging of the achievement gap between low-income students and their peers from families with higher incomes (Haskins et al., 2012). Federal mandates have aimed in the past to tackle the issues of student achievement through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). Introduced in 2002 the NCLB Act established nationwide high-stakes achievement testing (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). The act proposed incentives for schools which showed improvement in achievement based on tests in grades 3-8 on the standards of each state (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). The RTTT initiative, enacted in 2009, promised additional funding for schools under the condition state laws were modified to use test scores of students in the evaluation of teachers (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). M. Levine and Levine (2013) predicted the RTTT initiative would serve to escalate pressure on teachers regarding student achievement and bring into question whether the standards had been taught.

Educational standards, while "useful in clarifying the knowledge, skills, and competencies that society expects from individuals," have developed into significant factors in elementary and secondary education (Haskins et al., 2012, p. 1). Haskins et al. (2012) noted the public has needed a method to discern if educational standards had been met, and as such, have turned to testing. However, Haskins et al. (2012) warned the best standards would not be able to increase achievement unless they were a part of an exceptional approach. In the search for higher achievement and the stress of meeting

standards placed upon schools, recess has even been eliminated in lieu of more time devoted to academics (Vatterott, 2009). Duncan et al. (2016) noted the use of rewards, money, and other enticements may not increase achievement if schools have not included learning among students and teachers as an important part of the educational function. Providing teachers with knowledge may be one of the strongest supports a district can provide which will help all stakeholders reach accountability (Duncan et al., 2016).

Vatterott (2009) stressed limiting failures and building confidence in learning should have been the aim of the assessment of the learner. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2016) recognized the need for tools to measure student learning but stressed the use of numerous measurement tools rather than one high-stakes achievement test. When utilizing high-stakes testing tools, it has been important to make decisions about student learning based on various sources of data (NCTM, 2016). Authors M. Levine and Levine (2013) disagreed with the use of high-stakes testing as a reliable means of raising scores which have done nothing but widen the achievement gap, while not providing satisfactory information about student learning. Though M. Levine and Levine (2013) mentioned the ready availability of test scores from each state, they argued the use of high-stakes achievement testing had wasted time and energy of teachers and students and endorsed fraud and abuse.

It has been problematic to specify homework's impact on achievement, according to Vatterott (2009), because it has been difficult to decide if students' achievement occurred from the homework or the influence of the classroom teacher on the students' learning. Another reason for difficulty in relating achievement and homework has been identifying whether a student scored higher because of homework completion or if the

student would have scored high without completing the homework (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) disagreed with the thought of utilizing homework as a form of achievement by placing grades on assignments, which for students in certain family situations has served as more of a punishment for the home environment, rather than an adequate source of academic data. Vatterott (2009) argued grades have not been necessary to show learning has occurred and the role of homework should not be assessment, thus not graded. An option for forming achievement success would be to identify students' motivation and sense of competence (Vatterott, 2009).

Achievement gaps between students at varying economic groups have been recognized at district and state level assessments, which in the opinion of the NCTM (2014), may have been narrowed with equity among student outcomes. Students who experienced failing grades and a lack of success were found to disengage from school at more increased rates (Vatterott, 2009). Once students became disengaged, the lack of motivation, as well as lowered self-esteem, influenced students' decisions on whether to continue in education or not (Vatterott, 2009). Haskins et al. (2012) discussed teaching quality as the means to closing the achievement gap. Labaree (2012) argued it had not been the result of student outcomes or the quality of teaching which had impacted student achievement, but rather the fact people of the United States had expected schools to solve every social and individual's problems.

Student achievement was found to be more increased when students had quality teachers for several successive years (Haskins et al., 2012). Haskins et al. (2012) found quality educators "can boost learning, increase test scores, and improve life outcomes" (p. 4). Teacher education programs may affect the quality of teaching in future educators

(Buettner et al., 2016). In a study of teacher education programs, Buettner et al. (2016) also found course offerings for future educators did not vary greatly from two- and four-year teacher education programs. The main differences in the programs were the bachelor programs tended to emphasize knowledge, curriculum, and assessment, while associate degree programs concentrated more on classroom and program management (Buettner et al., 2016).

An argument for changes in teacher education programs was mentioned by Biscoglio and Langer (2011) who indicated teacher education programs had not placed much emphasis on the topic of homework. Vatterott (2009) agreed teachers had not been effectively trained on designing and enforcing homework methods. Teacher education programs have not provided resourceful coaching "in how to devise meaningful assessments, decide how much to assign, or involve parents in the process" (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011, p. 55). Haskins et al. (2012) added teacher education programs should have incorporated training for teachers to work with students from low-income homes to help these students to be more academically successful. Carr (2013) confirmed teachers have needed to be offered the education and implements to create effective homework.

One way to assist teachers in improving student achievement has been to focus on the teacher's acceptance of committed success to their students (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). Soule and Warrick (2015) did not believe learning and its subsequent achievement should be restricted to the classroom. The responsibility for students' achievements and successes has been too immense for school leaders to accomplish alone (Soule & Warrick, 2015). Student abilities, as well as how those abilities have been showcased, have differed by individuals (International Reading Association [IRA],

2014). Katz et al. (2009) found the teachers' support of psychological needs impacted students' motivation to complete homework more than other factors.

The International Reading Association (IRA, 2014) also encouraged using assessments for checking students' achievement. However, they recommended frequent, low-stakes testing to allow students to re-evaluate their learning and teachers to reconsider their teaching methods. Rather than placing total concentration on one high-stakes assessment, the use of projects, reading and writing tasks, and/or conferences, as well as employing teacher-made tests, have been shown to provide a better sense of students' academic achievements (IRA, 2014). The NCTM (2016) agreed formative and summative assessments have been a better choice when educators have attempted to gauge a student's learning growth. When viewing a student's academic performance, particularly when making grade retention or high school graduation decisions, the IRA (2014) recommended informal observation, formative assessments, and looking at out of school resources in conjunction with standardized tests to get a clear, overall illustration of a child's authentic academic achievement level.

Student growth. Student growth, typically measured by the end of the year grades in all subject areas, has often been influenced by many factors (Morrisey et al., 2014). Grigg (2012) stated students who had created relationships at school with teachers and other students had developed social capital. Continued attendance in school has been cited as a key component in student growth, which also has allowed students to build relationships; these relationships have allowed students to implement customs which aided in their learning (Grigg, 2012). Carr (2016) communicated academic subjects at school often had not been significant when students were more stressed about where they

would sleep, what they would eat, or how they would get to school more than gaining academic knowledge. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2014) has noted students who were healthy performed stronger at all levels of academic achievement, including academic performance, behavior at school, attitudes, and cognitive skills, in comparison to students who were not healthy.

Attendance. Morrisey et al. (2014) explained school attendance, even if the attendee had been late, may have been a method to boost academic achievement, especially when relevant to children from low-income families. According to Morrisey et al. (2014) school attendance was identified as a link between student achievement and family income. Often many students from low-income families have exhibited increased absences or tardies due to a need for self-sufficiency by the students when parents had to work shifts considered nonstandard or rotating (Morrisey et al., 2014). This instability in families' home situations may have contributed to the establishment of challenging routines which then led to additional students' tardies or absences in school (Morrisey et al., 2014). The academic success of students also could have been impacted when students had to miss school due to the of the shortage of economic resources (Morrisey et al., 2014).

Morrisey et al. (2014) explained the hazards of missed classes as the loss of interactions between teachers and peers, failure to collaborate in learning activities, and losses of information from teacher-led discussions. Children in low-income families have tended to miss school more often than their higher-income peers who may have resulted in a marked widening of the achievement gap (Morrisey et al., 2014). Grigg (2012) suggested not only had the relationships between the student and teachers and

student and peers been broken, but so had the relationships between parents and other parents. School attendance also may be impacted by changing schools, whether a required changed, such as moving up in grade levels or due to a family change in housing and may have produced academic issues for the student (Grigg, 2012). Grigg (2012) found a "small but real cost associated with changing schools" (p. 399). For example, when a student changed schools during the academic year or moved prior to the beginning of a new academic year, one apparent cost was related to the curriculum (Grigg, 2012). The sequential nature of mathematics instruction may have a greater negative impact on students who have changed schools throughout the course of the school year, while language arts curriculums follow a less rigid timetable (Grigg, 2012). Attendance, whether through missed and tardy days or changing or moving schools, may have impacted a student's academic achievement due to a loss of relationships with peers and teachers (Morrisey et al., 2014).

Resources. The lack of available resources, whether financial or otherwise, may have proven academically dangerous for students as well (Payne, 2013). Payne (2013) stated the importance of educators recognizing which resources students had available was significant in deciding which interventions were the most likely to provide success. Payne (2013) identified seven categories of resources students may or may not have had available, and which benefitted the students:

- Emotional resources provided a means to help students to refrain from destruction and self-destructive behaviors (Payne (2013).
- Physical resources referred to the actual body and its capacity to provide movement (Payne, 2013).

- Spiritual resources allowed individuals to seek help from "a higher power, that this is a purpose for living, and that worth and love are gifts from God" (Payne, 2013, p. 9).
- Mental and cognitive resources were recognized as having the ability to process information and utilize it in daily life (Payne, 2013).
- Support systems were the contacts an individual may have accessed in times of need (Payne, 2013).
- Relationships and role models were resources if they were appropriate (Payne, 2013).
- Language and formal register were referred to as possessing the vocabulary, as well as sentence structure, found to be necessary for school and work (Payne, 2013).

Payne's (2013) research into children from backgrounds of poverty was widely utilized, predominantly among educators in schools with a high number of children from low-income families. However, not everyone agreed with the comments and assertions discussed by Payne (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) disagreed with a sizable percentage of Payne's published comments. According to Smyth and Wrigley (2013), Payne's work served to "intensify prejudice, lower expectations, and encourage routine and unchallenging teaching methods" (p. 114). Payne (2013), as well as Smith and Wrigley (2013), agreed on the demand to examine specifically which factors impacted students from low-income families and how to best utilize their resources.

Another topic of contention between Smyth and Wrigley (2013) and Payne (2013) had to do with language. Smyth and Wrigley (2013) felt the restricted language

differences between home and school had more to do with comparisons of spoken language to written language. Payne (2013) leaned heavily on a longitudinal study conducted by Hart and Risley (2003). Hart and Risley (2003) observed 42 families for a period of two and a half years; each of the families had children who were just learning how to talk (Hart & Risley, 2003). To prepare families for the observational process, observations began when the children were seven to nine months old (Hart & Risley, 2003). The results of the observations showed in the areas of vocabulary, language, and interaction as the children were just the same as their parents, and the words heard in the family provided a basis for a 30 million-word gap by the age of three years old (Hart & Risley, 2003). Hart and Risley (2003) compiled data from over 1,300 hours of observation and research and noted while the average child on welfare was exposed to 616 words per hour, the average child from the working-class heard 1,251 words per hour, and the average child in a professional family heard 2,153 words per hour. Hart and Risley (2003) also noted the extreme differences in the number of encouraging words children had been exposed to within the social classes. Children from families receiving welfare benefits heard five encouraging words an hour, working-class children heard 12 positive words an hour, and children from professional families were exposed to 32 encouraging words per hour (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Health and well-being. Parents, in general, expressed concerns regarding the health, both physical and psychological, of their children no matter what their social class was (Vatterott, 2009). Vatterott (2009) found counselors and pediatricians reported stress-induced complaints of headaches and stomach pains caused by anxiety felt by children over homework. Not only had stress been experienced by students, Pressman et

al. (2015) discovered family stress had been compounded by the parents' frustrations in assisting with homework. Smyth and Wrigley (2013) indicated individuals who had lived in poverty had faced a considerable amount of stress, which then influenced the care and well-being of their children. Within the home the stress and tensions of living in poverty may have caused domestic violence (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) and as a result the disruptive home environment may cause distrust in schools (Jenson, 2013). Along with stress experienced in the home, parents may have felt family time was being sacrificed because of homework (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) encouraged families to advocate for their children and time with family when it came to extensive homework.

Some individuals argued against homework to allow more opportunity for sleep and exercise due to the rise in childhood obesity and sleep deprivation experienced by school-aged children (Vatterott, 2009). Physical activity and nutritious food was identified as ways to improve the academic achievement of children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014). Jenson (2013) agreed nutrition was critical; yet, lower-income families tended to be exposed to foods with less nutritional value (Jenson, 2013). Vatterott (2009) pointed out many children had forfeited "fresh air, exercise, or sleep to toil over more hours of homework" (p. 24). The CDC (2014) designed and provided recommendations for schools to aid in increasing nutrition and augmenting time for physical activity for students. A few of the suggestions were to regularly provide nutritional options for all school-sponsored activities and to offer physical education programs, recess, extra-curricular physical activities, and classroom-based physical activities. The benefits of increased physical activity and nutritional food offerings may

have helped school districts to improve students' test scores, grades, and attendance (CDC, 2014). Jenson (2013) added, individuals from low-income families were not as likely to exercise, to receive a correct diagnosis, and to obtain appropriate medical attention as individuals from higher economic groups. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) placed the responsibility for children's well-being, specifically sleep time, physical activity, and time spent with family and friends, on the parents. The parents should have taken ownership and molded their children into complete human beings, which included encouraging academic learning (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Cognitive abilities. Discussions regarding the way ability or intelligence were conceptualized have been necessary for schools to improve academic achievement (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Jenson (2013) found children from low-income families had shown cognitive concerns such as short attention spans and ease of distractibility. Bernstein et al. (2012) concluded, the environment either strengthens or weakens an individual's abilities. The brain development of children who have experienced chaotic environments were shown to be more stressed and insecure than students who did not have these issues (Jenson, 2013). A child's mental growth was impeded by a lack of what may have been considered normal intellectual stimulation (Bernstein et al., 2012).

Researchers discovered children from low-income families have smaller volumes of white and cortisol gray matter and altered brain compositions (Bidwell, 2013). According to Bidwell (2013), the white and gray matter "are associated with sending communication in the brain, as well as sensory perceptions, memory, emotions and speech" (para. 2). Cortisol, a hormone, has been known to signal the fight or flight reaction to assist individuals with a response to danger (Bernstein et al., 2012). Bernstein

et al. (2012) discussed three types of memory; if one area has not been developed into the memory process, there could be deficiencies in memory (Bernstein et al., 2012). The first area, encoding, referred to how the information was communicated, such as through visual cues (Bernstein et al., 2012). The second process, storage, denoted how long the information was stored, while the third basic memory process, retrieval, represented how the information was recovered (Bernstein et al., 2012). Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, found decreased brain capacity in the areas of emotion, processing, and memory in children who were members of low-socioeconomic families as compared to counterparts in other socioeconomic families (Bidwell, 2013).

School culture. One vital component for student achievement has been the climate of the school (Allen et al., 2015). Demir (2015) stated for there to be an ongoing enhancement in schools, there must be cultural changes "in assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits" (p. 623). School culture had been deemed vital, yet convoluted in education (Demir, 2015). Demir (2015) explained, school culture necessitated contemplation as a total component of various particulars and a heterogeneous snapshot of the organizational truths. Developing a strong school culture designed to aid all stakeholders in learning and growing may have encouraged the participants to place the focus on the priority of schools-learning (Demir, 2015).

Benner et al. (2016) discussed the idea of academic socialization and its compelling connection to student achievement. Academic socialization was identified as both the unforeseen discussions regarding schools which "communicate parents' educational expectations for the child" and the actual discussions in which "parents

directly promote the development of their children's future educational and occupational future" (Benner et al., 2016, p. 1,054). Demir (2015) stated within schools, all individuals had their own thoughts on behaviors and expectations of roles pertaining to the learning process. The assumption all individuals had including expecting others to know their roles had led to expectations of appropriate behaviors and attitudes (Demir, 2016).

Schools in which their leaders had undertaken the duties to explore and to provide meaningful ways to reach students and families had often experienced success (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Unfortunately, some schools, and as a product, the culture of the schools, had been assumed to be lacking in educational aptitude due to the neighborhood housing the school (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Blair and Raver (2014) found schools, which had taught and supported self-regulation, had shown academic benefit, especially with children from high-poverty neighborhoods. Teachers who expressed feeling the culture of their schools as positively constructive showed increased levels of student achievement (Allen et al., 2015). When positive school culture became a working mechanism of the school, students benefited, both academically and in their development (Berryhill & Vennum, 2015).

Leadership. To increase student achievement, as well as to build significant relationships with students, principals needed to seek new ways to impact both teachers and students in positive ways (Brown, 2016; Smith & Addison, 2013). Whereas principals of the past were managers conveying rules, current principals have had to "become leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction" (Wallace, 2013, p. 6). Wallace (2013) considered the principal as a teacher focused on

instruction rather than having followed top-down authorizations. Wallace (2013) identified five key responsibilities of effective leaders:

- Creation of a shared vision for academic success encompassing ambitious standards.
- Designing a climate which presented a safe, orderly, supportive facility centered on learning and characterized by mutual respect for all stakeholders.
- Fostering leadership in others through professional development and collaboration.
- Refining instruction by defining high expectations, intent on high-quality instruction and spending time in the classroom for an awareness of what had worked and what had not.
- Possessing managerial aptitude in utilizing available resources.

Wallace (2013) warned effective leadership may not happen immediately but may take five to seven years before benefits might be witnessed. It may be very difficult for improvements within the educational setting to be achieved without effective leadership (Wallace, 2013).

Ethical leadership. Ethical leaders have tended to create positive relationships through encouragement, compassion, and sincerity without compromising their values or beliefs (Elliott, Krouse, Burian, & Fogle, 2013). Ethical leaders have been able to maintain strong relationships without having passed judgment on their employees (Elliott et al., 2013). Lawton and Paez (2015) contemplated, an ethical leader was one who had developed honesty, integrity, and morality. Elliott et al. (2013) noted the honesty of an ethical leader was based on the lader's ability to make appropriate decisions. Ethical

leaders demonstrated behavior, which set an example of inspiration and motivation for members of their organization (Elliott et al., 2013; Lawton & Paez, 2015).

When faced with meeting educational or organizational goals, ethical leaders have been focused on designing and creating visions (Lawton & Paez, 2015). Connecting the goals with the other stakeholders, another attribute of ethical leaders, may have afforded the result of open communication among all stakeholders (Elliott et al., 2013). Ethical leaders have not been immersed by self-interest, but rather on decision-making fixed on developing relationships (Elliott at al., 2013; Lawton & Paez, 2015). Authenticity has required leaders to be true to themselves and others (Elliott et al., 2013). Lawton and Paez (2015) agreed authenticity, along with integrity, should be witnessed in action among ethical leaders. Ethical leaders were found to bring trust to their institutions, which provided their institutions with the wherewithal to pursue their academic goals (Elliott et al., 2013). Lawton and Paez (2015) isolated three facets to leadership styles: (a) leadership in, which had shown leaders in action, (b) leadership of, focused on providing an example for others to follow, and (c) leadership for, recognizing and coaching the organizational goals. Elliott et al. (2013) documented ethical leadership as the manifestation of ethics and allegiance to do what was comprehended as right.

Transformational leadership. Demir (2015) discussed a transformational leader as one who encouraged teacher collaboration, provided a supportive work environment, and offered managerial support. Just as trust was a major component of ethical leadership, so it was with transformational leadership, as trust had been considered a requirement for stable relationships (Demir, 2015). Demir (2015) stressed trust among professional relationships was necessary for productive relationships and cooperation to

occur within the school. Trust was defined as the "teacher's belief that the behavior of principals, colleagues, parents, and students will be helpful, honest, responsible, principled, just, and consistent in consideration of the school's target" (Demir, 2015, p. 625). When teachers had trust in their supervisors, they were more likely to continue the trust with other educational stakeholders (Demir, 2015).

Within the realm of transformational leadership, effective school administrators assisted the schools by having appreciated teacher opinions, providing necessary resources, and supporting open communication (Demir, 2015). Administrators who had worked to create environments rich in instruction had allowed educators to build relationships of trust and collaboration (Demir, 2015). Demir (2015) also recognized the use of horizontal leadership, which had been less structured and directed to provide cooperation among administrators and staff. When school leaders encouraged teacher leadership, often it led to autonomy, solidarity, combined decision making, strengthened communication, and served as a source of support for the educators (Demir, 2015). Demir (2015) felt additional research on organizational trust and the impact on schools' cultures would be beneficial in realizing the value of teacher leadership.

Teacher training. Whitaker and Fiore (2001) noted an asset of American schools was being recognized and essential centers of the community. Wallace (2013) said, "Teachers go into the profession to be successful with kids" (p. 18). Previously, it had often been the teachers who actively fought for the rights of their students to learn (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). However, recently, many political figures have used ineffective school systems as the reason for "economic division in society" (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. 129). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) cautioned this insinuation has

communicated inferior teaching harmed students instead of the poverty situations in which the students lived.

Many teacher education programs, specifically programs that dealt with preparing teachers of young children, did not adequately equip future educators to teach specific subject matter information to young students (Clements & Sarama, 2016). Certification programs have been too varied in their requirements and often proved to be of low quality, which have proven the assumption educators who had received certification would be high-quality teachers as false (Clements & Sarama, 2016). In a statement by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2013), teacher preparation programs needed to include mathematics in their early childhood curriculum. In 2014, the NCTM stated educators- future and veterans- must have "the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to support effective, equitable mathematics teaching and learning" (para. 3). Katz et al. (2009) explained the often-controversial use of homework may have been a valuable topic to be included in teacher training programs.

Educators who were in the classroom needed effective professional development to help build the culture within their buildings and to continue to grow and learn a variety of teaching strategies (Demir, 2015). Demir (2015) noted, teachers were seldom witnessed collaborating with their contemporaries. The International Reading Association (IRA, 2014) encouraged school leaders to provide professional development in the areas of assessments and literacy strategies. The use of these assessments and strategies may have provided educators a clearer illustration of their students' academic performances (IRA, 2014). Clements and Sarama (2016) noted, many professional development opportunities tended not to focus on mathematics or sciences. High-quality

mathematics teaching needed to be supported by superior professional development (NCTM, 2013). Professional development not only should have focused on the academic achievement of students but the overall health and well-being of the child as well, including how healthy eating choices and physical activity had linked to learning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014). DeJarnette (2012) acknowledged teacher education program directors needed to connect with public education institutions to provide professional development for all educators, first year and veteran.

Maintaining high-quality teaching in all schools may have proven difficult to achieve, yet for schools in poorer communities, it has been nearly impossible (Haskins et al., 2012). Haskins et al. (2012) reported communities with large numbers of poor families have been plagued with ineffective teachers. Four suggestions on how high-poverty schools could entice and maintain high-quality educators have been provided by Haskins et al. (2012). The first suggestion has been to recognize and work to improve the social conditions of the workplace, such as leadership, culture, and available resources (Haskins et al., 2012). The second suggestion was to encourage collaboration especially with effective grade-level coworkers (Haskins et al., 2012). The third suggestion recognized the fact rewarding teachers through pay based on years of experience, participation in professional development and educational certification has not truly compensated passionate high-quality teachers (Haskins et al., 2012). Finally, Haskins et al. (2012) found improved pay had worked in appealing to and holding excellent teachers, yet it had often not compensated for the poor working conditions in the schools. Haskins et al. (2012) determined it would have taken a combination of accountability and

incentives to attract and retain high-quality educators to schools where high-poverty had been present.

Curriculum. One area school leaders may have experienced academic achievement success has been with using data curriculum tools (Brown, 2016). Curriculum has been referred to as what was taught (Squires, 2012). Squires (2012) discussed improving district achievement by "paying attention and aligning their written, taught, and tested curriculum" (p. 134). School districts have needed curriculum, which not only stipulates what students must know, but also had been aligned to standards and assessments (Squires, 2012). There had been a distinction made between standards and curriculum− standards were general, and curriculum was specific (Squires, 2012).

For educators in school districts to have adequately prepared students for assessments, there has been a required alignment between curriculum and the standards and assessments at the state level (Squires, 2012). Squires (2012) remarked alignment which intersected the designed curriculum ensured the instructional process contained the standards. Concerns have been raised on the alignment process due to the abundant standards available or required by students to master (Squires, 2012). Squires (2012) recognized state standards typically had been the written curriculum while state tests had been the tested curriculum.

Parent Involvement. Traditionally, parents have been the primary teacher for their child until he or she had begun attending childcare or school (Ceka & Murati, 2016). The influence of the parental teachings had continued to impact student learning throughout school (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Ceka and Murati (2016) stated, parental involvement in homework might have served as an important strategy for parents in

supporting their children's educations. Educators and administrators have needed to refrain from considering parents as obstacles and instead focused on parents as valuable resources and partners to assist the students (Andrew, 2015; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Smyth and Wrigley (2013) noted there has been success in engaging parents to assist with their children's learning, if the school had provided an assortment of programs along with student learning.

Benner et al. (2016) identified two types of parental involvement with schools. School-based involvement included parents' participation in volunteer programs, parent-teacher conferences, and school organizations (Benner et al., 2016). The second parental involvement type, home-based contribution, was comprised of activities promoted by parents in the home, such as monitoring homework, checking homework, and encouraging enrichment activities (Benner et al., 2016). Benner et al. (2016) considered home-based involvement unpredictable or inconsistent and deemed enrichment pursuits promoted achievement, while homework tended to negatively impact academics. Parents had positively impacted their children by involvement which had praised, valued, and rewarded the way their children completed academic tasks (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Ceka and Murati (2016) stated parental support in homework might have worked to help students establish a procedure for learning.

Assessments. Standardized testing in the United States has been used in two ways, sorting students and evaluating the quality of education, since the beginning of testing movements (Brookhart, 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, a "back to the basics" movement led to the minimum competency testing movement, and society began to view test scores as unbiased measurements of learning (Brookhart, 2013). The public was interested in

testing, which provided comparisons among students and brought attention to declining test scores within the United States (Brookhart, 2013). The educational issues brought to light during this time frame were which basic skills to test, and thus, raised two distinct social issues, competition and blame (Brookhart, 2013). Brookhart (2013) explained competition resulted from test scores being published through the media sources of the time, television and newspapers, and led to the labeling of winners and losers regarding local school districts. The blame game became popularized when society wished for simplistic reasoning for failing scores and fell to blaming everything from the curriculum to the teachers for their failures in providing quality education (Brookhart, 2013). Students were not exempt from the blame of a lack of accomplishment and were called undisciplined, uninterested, and unmotivated (Brookhart, 2013).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the standards-based reform movement took precedence over the minimum competency testing movement due in part to increased frustration over a lack of stable improvement in student achievement (Brookhart, 2013; Duncan et al., 2016). States became involved in developing standards and assessments utilizing the ever-popular multiple-choice questions and the more experimental performance tasks and portfolios (Brookhart, 2013). Duncan et al. (2016) explained during this time the states officials attempted to stipulate which skills students needed to master at specific grade levels and then developed assessments to measure how well students had reached mastery. During the standards-based reform movement "support grew for achievement testing and making comparisons" (Brookhart, 2013, p. 61). Competition and comparisons within the United States and into the international sector were apparent during this testing movement (Brookhart, 2013). Public support for higher standards was

unmistakable, yet controversy was building over who would set the standards and the availability of equal instruction for all students (Brookhart, 2013). Brookhart (2013) noted the social issue for the standards-based reform movement continued to be competition, specifically between school districts whose scores were often published in local newspapers. The newspaper comparisons signaled fear and embarrassment for schools and led to many schools agonizing over how they scored on tests rather than what students were learning (Brookhart, 2013). Duncan et al. (2016) explained the standards-based reform movement turned into accountability testing highlighting school accountability for student achievement. Concerns over students being subjected to too much testing occurred at the end of the standards-based reform movement (Brookhart, 2013).

The early 2000s signaled the beginning of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era, which focused on objectivity and test usefulness, especially as an "indicator for economic competitiveness" (Brookhart, 2013, p. 66). One issue found throughout the NCLB assessment was the validity of measurements while competition remained to be the primary social issue (Brookhart, 2013). Brookhart (2013) explained those who had been a part of the assessment processes had expressed concern regarding how the public understood assessments, specifically what test scores denoted and how the scores had been targeted upon "mental processes that cannot be observed directly" (p. 67).

Within the assessment processes had been two distinct forms, summative and formative (IRA, 2013). According to the IRA (2013), formative assessments had provided useful feedback for students and educators, had supported improvements, and had been both purposeful and collaborative. Formative assessments had allowed students

to take responsibility for improving their learning (IRA, 2013). Summative assessments had examined continued learning and had occurred over an extended amount of time which had made improving instruction difficult (IRA, 2014). The IRA (2014) expressed concern over the use of summative assessments meant to either reward or punish students and educators.

In their research article, "*Holding Accountability Accountable: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Achievement Test Scores*," M. Levine and Levine (2013) examined high-stakes testing and the money involved, which they believed to be wasteful. M. Levine and Levine (2013) considered high-stakes testing as creating waste, fraud, and abuse. The money spent on achievement testing had been perceived as wasteful in the financial aspect and in the time and energy of educators and students (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). Fraud had been documented because of the large number of cheating scandals found in numerous states (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). M. Levine and Levine (2013) discovered many forms of abuse resulting from high-stakes testing to include (a) abuse of the educational process, (b) abuse of the loss of recess time because of test preparation instruction, (c) the abuse of children who had suffered stress stemming from test taking, (d) the abuse of immigrant children forced to perform in a language with which they were still learning, (e) the abuse of educators forced into micromanaging and feeling a loss of professionalism to raise test scores, and (f) the abuse of teachers who had feared the loss of their positions if test scores were not within certain parameters.

M. Levine and Levine (2013) feared there would be no end in sight for achievement testing, yet concerns had risen about whether the tests would actually measure what they had claimed to measure. Financially, the testing industry had created

$2.8 billion annually since the inception of NCLB (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). M. Levine and Levine (2013) argued there had been options to what had been spent on testing which would have promoted student learning to a greater degree. In New York state, start-up costs for research laboratories in 1,000 high schools could be provided for with only 10% of what New York state had spent annually on achievement testing (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). Another option for better use of testing money was shown in an example of underprivileged first-grade students (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). First-grade teachers in a low-income neighborhood, with a population which included over half being immigrant families with limited English proficiency, found a private grant to take their students to the local zoo (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). Following the zoo trip, students completed writing activities, such as essays and thank-you notes (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). The estimated cost for the zoo trip was $1,000 which provided tickets and transportation for 100 students and a few volunteers (M. Levine & Levine, 2013). M. Levine and Levine (2013) projected 15,800 zoo trips for disadvantaged children could have been supported by the roughly $5.8 million New York state had spent on testing annually. It had been the opinion of M. Levine and Levine (2013) the state of New York, as well as the nation, had not bought any educational benefit from the high-stakes testing.

Fisher, Frey, and Nelson (2012) explained school leadership has been under immense pressure to perform well on assessments. Assessments had been considered high-stakes because districts, teachers, and students had much to lose or possibly gain through the testing (IRA, 2014; M. Levine & Levine, 2013). In many of the assessments, students had been ranked based on below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced designations (IRA, 2014). DeJarnette (2012) feared achievement testing emphasis had

demoted the learning of science in elementary schools, particularly in inquiry-based projects. Individuals who sought benefits of achievement testing focused on everyone taking the same test (M. Levine & Levine, 2013), yet Soule and Warrick (2015) explained many of the assessments in kindergarten through twelfth grade measured facts, not how to apply knowledge in complicated circumstances.

Individuals in opposition of high-stakes testing had suspected the assessments had not been useful in improving learning (M. Levine & Levine, 2013) and had not provided a complete illustration of what students' knowledge might be (IRA, 2014). Soule and Warrick (2015) stated the challenges of low performances might have caused a gap between domestic and international skills with the impact on a global scale. The United States, while having spent more money and time on its educational system than many other nations, had generally not scored high on international student comparisons (Labaree, 2012). To address the apparent issues with achievement testing's high stakes, Soule and Warrick (2015) recommended utilization of a variety of assessment tools, such as rubrics, portfolios, formative and summative assessments included within classroom assessment programs. Squires (2012) stressed content must be covered during instruction prior to assessment and recommended the use of common assessments rather than relying solely on statewide assessments. In looking toward the future of achievement testing, Soule and Warrick (2015) stated the demand for applied skills had been identified. To adequately prepare students for the skills required in the future workplace, Bergmann and Waddell (2012) encouraged an increase in inquiry and project-based learning. Through all the debates surrounding high-stakes assessment and student learning, Bergmann and Waddell (2012) sought to remind stakeholders it had been that the educators were often

held accountable for student learning through testing, yet, it should have been the individual students who were responsible for their own learning.

One nationally recognized assessment has been the National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, which measured academic achievement trends in the United States since 1969 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). The NAEP has been the largest ongoing assessment of what elementary and secondary students had learned and could do in various subjects (NCES, 2017). In the state of Missouri, the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) has been the statewide assessment program since the 1930s (MODESE, 2017). The MAP had been designed to test student knowledge based on the Missouri Learning Standards and had been slated to be used in measuring strengths and weaknesses in instruction and learning within the educational system of Missouri (MODESE, 2017). The MAP had been utilized at various grade levels through the years, most recently in grades three through eight in English Language Arts and Mathematics with Science testing in grades five and eight (MODESE, 2017).

English Language Arts. To flourish in today's world, students must have had the ability to read and comprehend (van den Broek & Espin, 2012). Reading comprehension has been noted as being an exceedingly complex task which individuals participate in regularly (Catts & Kahmi, 2017). Students, who had communicated the ability to comprehend informational text, had been viewed as indicators of academic success (Catts & Kahmi, 2017). Fisher et al. (2012) stated reading instruction infiltrates other subjects. Griggs (2012) indicated the flexibility found within literacy instruction, as it incorporates various curricular programs, may have assisted students who had changed schools. Richardson et al. (2015) found many parents wanted their children to be strong readers

yet did not possess confidence in their ability to help.

Voorhees (2011) perceived a connection between reading assessment and homework assignments, yet not much research had been completed on this topic. For homework tasks to be beneficial and applicable, educators must have been aware of the reading abilities of their students (Voorhees, 2011). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) discussed possible homework assignments, such as creative writing and summer reading lists to assist in preventing academic loss over summer. Vatterott (2010) indicated broadening what educators perceived as recommended reading to include blogs, magazines, and websites would have been beneficial, as well as having placed the attention on "whether the reading did them any good" rather than being concerned over if students read (p. 13). Other options for connecting reading and homework have included creative projects based on the interest of the child in addition to having allowed children to read for pleasure instead of utilizing workbook pages (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011).

Catts and Kahmi (2017) defined reading activities as the undertaking of "reading to learn, reading to identify specific facts, reading to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an argument, or reading a narrative for pleasure" (p. 74). Many parents have often separated reading activities from other types of homework (Pressman et al., 2015). When reading informational texts, often a source of homework, children have been tasked with acquiring knowledge rather than reviewing previously learned information (Catts & Kahmi, 2017). Catts and Kahmi (2017) discussed the magnitude of providing primary students with distinct content learning to repress the widening of the knowledge gap across grades. As Catts and Kahmi (2017) explained, "Background knowledge is critical to comprehension" (p. 75). The responsibility of providing lessons

for the application of beginning reading, such as the principle of sound into print, has fallen onto the shoulders of teachers in the early grades (Snow & Matthews, 2016).

By the time students have completed third grade, they have been expected to have attained the introductory literacy skills (Snow & Matthews, 2016). The language and communication patterns of most students have been in place before they entered first grade (Wixson, 2017). Language proficiency was recognized as an influence on reading and writing achievement and has impacted reading comprehension throughout students' educational pursuits (Wixson, 2017). Jenson (2013) identified vocabulary as the words that helped students represent and re-frame information. Students from low-income families have been less likely to recognize words in reading material or some words used by the teacher (Jenson, 2013).

In Snow and Matthews' (2016) research on language and vocabulary acquisition, constrained and unconstrained skills were identified and discussed. Constrained skills, or abilities directly taught, had fixed fields, such as 26 letters of the alphabet and 100 sight words (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Constrained skills were found to be less complicated to improve due to their well-defined objectives and proven ways to assess (Snow & Matthews, 2016). It had not been uncommon for constrained skills mastery to take two to three years caused by complex English principles and deviations from decodable patterns (Snow & Matthews, 2016). However, once mastery had been achieved students had been able to comprehend texts at a second- or third-grade level because of familiarization of the words (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Unconstrained skills, on the other hand, often have been learned through experiences, such as vocabulary and background knowledge and were proven critical in predicting long-term literacy results

(Snow & Matthews, 2016). The unconstrained skills, which had demonstrated to be difficult to teach within the classroom, had largely been predicted by parental education levels and social classes (Snow & Matthews, 2016). The complexity of teaching vocabulary had been in selecting appropriate words, providing opportunities for practice, defining words using child-friendly terminology, offering exposure to the word and affording the opportunity for the student to use the word (Snow & Matthews, 2016). It had been common for early childhood programs through third grade to have focused on the constrained skills due to the ease in assessing (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Snow and Matthews (2016) warned against this procedure by stating once a student had moved beyond third grade, success may have depended upon the ability to comprehend words not familiar to spoken language, as well as being able to make connections with information read and background knowledge possessed.

Assessments in reading comprehension and vocabulary had drawn far-reaching attention (van den Broek & Espin, 2012). The International Reading Association (IRA, 2016) stated the complexity of reading and writing skills assessment could not be measured accurately by a single test. Catts and Kahmi (2017) addressed the concern of American children losing ground on national assessments as being complex and had involved influences, such as "political, economic, educational, and conceptual" (p. 73). While the IRA (2014) recognized literacy achievement might have needed to improve, they also acknowledged high-stakes assessments had frequently forced educators to teach to the test. One common national reading assessment was the NAEP reading assessment, which measured reading comprehension by requiring students to read grade-appropriate materials and to answer questions based on what they had read (National Center for

Educational Statistics [NCES], 2017). In 2015, approximately one-third of fourth-grade students performed at or above proficient level in reading and the average score was not significantly different than in 2013 (NCES, 2017). The 2015 scores were six points higher than the earliest reading assessment score in 1992 (NCES, 2017). Regarding vocabulary on the 2013 NAEP assessment, scores increased from 2011-2013 for students at fourth grade who were identified as middle and higher performing students (NCES, 2017). On the 2013 vocabulary test, 75% of fourth-grade students recognized the meaning of the word "fascinating" and female students scored higher than male students (NCES, 2017).

Mathematics. Research provided by Clements and Sarama (2016) discovered many adults had not believed young children should be taught mathematics, sciences, or technology. While the same adults had accepted primary mathematics, they had thought early literacy had been more important and appropriate (Clements & Sarama, 2016). Clements and Sarama (2016) argued mathematics and science should be appropriate and vital to young children's academic achievements. To Clements and Sarama (2016), mathematics was found to be a "fundamental component of thinking" (p. 78). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2012) had stated all children should have received high quality, challenging grade-level content and support.

One of the greatest predictors of mathematics knowledge in young children were the teachers' attitudes toward teaching mathematics (Clements & Sarama, 2016). Essential to mathematics learning had been teachers' motivations for students to interact and discuss their thought processes (NCTM, 2013). Children were able to demonstrate higher-level thinking skills in relation to mathematics when they had educators who

utilized research-based activities and lessons (Clements & Sarama, 2016). Children's apparent interest in numbers and shapes had encouraged positive outlooks about math (Clements & Sarama, 2016). The NCTM (2012) warned against wrongly identifying students of poverty, international families, children with disabilities, and children of minority groups as sources of low expectations in mathematics achievement. There has been a cultural opinion within the United States in which innate aptitude or ability must be apparent for mathematical achievement, whereas in other countries, such as Japan, where "achievement comes from effort" (Clements & Sarama, 2016, p. 87). The NCTM (2016) countered this belief system by stating students may demonstrate strength on assorted types of mathematical concepts in various applications of mathematics.

Clements and Sarama (2016) discussed the need for high-quality instruction in the early years of a child's education. However, many early childhood teachers have held negative attitudes and beliefs about math, often due to their own dislikes, fears, and doubts regarding their abilities (Clements & Sarama, 2016). The teaching of mathematics should have focused on collaboration, creating a growth mindset, and developing a sound understanding of the subject of mathematics as well as child development (NCTM, 2014). To create confidence in mathematical ability, children must have been provided with engaging climates which encourage exploration (NCTM, 2013). Clements and Sarama (2016) found math anxiety concern in the primary grades which had resulted in low math achievement. Educators who had been able to identify math anxiety were able to consider methods to ease the anxiety and keep students with high potential from avoiding math courses (Clements & Sarama, 2016).

Clements and Sarama (2016) warned there were possible barriers to quality

teaching of mathematics, such as negative attitudes and beliefs; yet, “the thinking and reasoning inherent in math may contribute broadly to cognitive development” (p. 86). To provide a quality mathematical education in understanding of math, children must have had an early exposure to rigorous and accessible content (NCTM, 2013) yet simple memorized facts which had either already been learned or may be learned quickly had been the focus of mathematical lessons rather than advanced concepts (Clements & Sarama, 2016). The NCTM (2016) noted children had the need for challenging mathematical tasks. The concepts deemed important by the NCTM (2013) included numbers and operations, geometry, algebraic reasoning, and measurement. It was the opinion of the NCTM (2016) these concepts allowed connection to other disciplines by encouraging sense-making, identifying assumptions, and developing arguments. Clements and Sarama (2016) recognized possible predictions of early math understanding might be sited on future mathematical achievement, as well as future reading achievement.

In their research in mathematics instruction and early childhood education, Clements and Sarama (2016) noted three long-term impacts of effective mathematics curriculum and competence. The first, sustainability, implied a continued yet accurate use of the curriculum (Clements & Sarama, 2016). The second area of impact identified by Clements and Sarama (2016), persistence, was promoted through alignment of the curriculum and continuity. Clements and Sarama’s (2016) third long-term impact was diffusion, defined as a “process by which an innovation spreads among the members of a social system” had been challenging to adequately assess (p. 82).

The NCTM (2016) addressed concerns regarding large-scale assessments of

mathematics. While in agreement large-scale assessments may provide a set of data helping ascertain the academic ability of students within a school, the assessments have merely been a "snapshot of student mathematical understanding on a particular set of problems on a particular day" (NCTM, 2016, para. 30). A more worthwhile use of the results of large-scale assessments has been in the identifying of gaps in content knowledge and alignment of district curriculum and standards (NCTM, 2016). Clements and Sarama (2016) mentioned assessments in mathematics should have covered "skills, facts, concepts, and problem-solving strategies" (p. 78). One large-scale assessment in use in the United States has been the NAEP, which was designed to measure knowledge and skills in math and the ability of students to apply the knowledge in problem-solving scenarios (NCES, 2017). In 2015, 40% of fourth-grade students in the United States performed at or about the proficient level in mathematics (NCES, 2017). The 2015 scores were one point lower in fourth grade than the scores for 2013 and were 27 points higher than scores reported in the earliest math assessment in 1992 (NCES, 2017). The use of effective homework, when presented in appropriate ways, may be a reliable and useful method to improve student's academic achievement in mathematics (Hampshire et al., 2014; Samm & Jeong, 2013).

Summary

In Chapter Two, the key concepts were reviewed in detail, including previous literature on theoretical frameworks related to human resources, needs, motivation, cognitive development, and multiple intelligences. The researcher also explored an array of topics within the literature connected with the ideas of homework and student achievement. In Chapter Three, the researcher will provide an outline of the study,

including the participants and instrumentation used. The design methodology will be described. Chapter Three will also include the data collection process and the data analysis of this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The literacy skills required for success in the current and future American workforce have caused educational institutions to struggle to adequately prepare students (Morton, Bichelmeyer, & Lindenbaum to President Choi, June 2, 2017). This can be seen currently at the higher institution level as apparent in a letter describing the fiscal year 2018 Budget Action Plan to President Choi of the University of Missouri System, University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC) from Chancellor Morton, Provost Bichelmeyer, and Vice Chancellor Lindenbaum (2017) indicating local employers suggested graduates from UMKC were not workforce ready to meet the needs of changing businesses. Morton, Bichelmeyer, and Lindenbaum (2017) stated, "While our mission to advance knowledge means that we at UMKC will continue to organize by academic discipline, we must also provide graduates with the skills and competence they need to succeed in life" (p. 16). In addition to continuing to focus on what students know, the university administrators have planned to include the concept of what can students do with what they know (Morton et al., to President Choi, June 2, 2017).

In the public education sector, educational leaders and educators have faced the challenge of forcing more and more into the school day to stay competitive or to prepare students for higher stakes testing and college preparation; which in turn, has required teachers to send more work home to be completed (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Homework debates have been a source of conflict and disagreement between parents and schools (Samm & Jeong, 2013). The conflict could be particularly true of students coming from disadvantaged families (Haskins et al., 2012). Students in poverty have significantly fewer resources available for educational growth (Payne, 2013). Blair and

Raver (2014) stated the educational inequalities linked with poverty are a national priority. Watkins and Stevens (2013) found educational stakeholders value homework; however, there has been a lack of clarity between the actual purpose and the implementation.

In this chapter, the problem and purpose of the study will be reviewed. The research design and methodology used to answer the study's research question will be clarified. The researcher will outline a plan to collect and analyze the data after the research has been launched. The population selected for the study, as well as the sample to be used, will be investigated. The instrumentation chosen by the researcher will be examined.

Problem and Purpose

The term "homework," used to describe school assignments completed at home, has been known to arouse emotions of dread and fear in both students and parents (Hampshire et al., 2014). Most students, parents, and educators, each, have had varied belief systems when extended to homework (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). Students have petitioned homework is not graded, not collected, nor have any connection to the curriculum being taught (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011). Parents have tended to compare their children's homework to what they experienced as students (Buell, 2004). Teachers have thought of homework as an extension of what was being taught in the classroom and as a form of communication between the classroom and the home (Samm & Jeong, 2013).

Student growth in academics traditionally has been measured through a variety of assessments. Snow and Matthews (2016) explained fewer assessments have been used in

early childhood and the early grades in elementary school due to the absence of state assessments prior to third grade. In their research study, however, Pressman et al. (2015) found students in the early grades had spent more time on completing homework assignments than had been expected. The problem to be studied, then, would be does homework in the early grades impact student growth on assessments. The most common assessment used in elementary schools in the state of Missouri, MAP, has occurred at the completion of third and fourth-grades (MODESE, 2017). Student growth through academic achievement and homework can relate to student engagement (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Lacour and Tissington (2011) found three areas which could affect student achievement: income, source of income, and the educational attainment of the mother. Students from low-income situations may be more likely to wrestle with educational engagement (Jensen, 2013).

Through this research study, the researcher hoped to examine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding the use of homework. Specific barriers to homework completion explored included (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework assigned, and (d) the nature of the assignments. The purpose of this study was to decide which area educators felt may have provided the greatest barrier to completion of homework, which would be of importance to current and future educators when choosing to assign homework. For this study, the researcher hoped to utilize the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade educators to find whether homework would be a viable tool to be used in promoting student growth.

Research Bias

Bias in research can occur when the design of a study supports a specific outcome (Fraenkel et al., 2015). There are many forms of bias which could impact a study (Fraenkel et al., 2015). One form of bias, observer bias, considers the possibility of the lack of objectivity by the observer, or researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Fraenkel et al. (2015) explained observer bias could bring the internal validity of the study into doubt. Fraenkel et al. (2015) continued by offering a suggestion on how to lessen the influence of observer bias. Collecting a large amount of data in an assortment of ways from a range of perspectives and then using the provided information against the researchers own perceptions is one way to alleviate the concern of observer bias (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The researcher hoped to assuage observer bias by utilizing surveys from teachers to generate an array of perspectives. The surveys would help in offering a variety of formats to gather the data.

A second research bias has been data collection bias (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Fraenkel et al. (2015) described data collection bias as the unintentional bias which can affect the internal validity of the study. In this study, the researcher was a current lower elementary teacher with knowledge of the subject being studied. To overcome the possibility of data collection bias the researcher needed to be cautious not to ask leading questions on the survey (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Fraenkel et al. (2015) also suggested regulating the procedures to lessen data collector bias. Having a set procedure for gathering data would provide consistency in data collection and allowed the researcher to avoid data collector bias.

Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the researcher outlined key questions to guide the study. Within the context of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

2. What barriers, (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework assigned, or (d) the nature of the assignments, inhibit student completion of homework the most?

3. In what ways does the size of the school district impact the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

Mixed-Methods Research Design

This study, a mixed-method design, utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Bluman (2013), qualitative research contains variables placed in specific categories due to similar characteristics. Quantitative research is numerical and can be ordered or ranked (Bluman, 2013). Maxwell (2013) explained the purpose of using mixed methods in research as a way to check each method against each other to establish if the various strengths and weaknesses of different methods would support a single assumption. Using mixed-method approaches to research also aided the researcher in gaining information about diverse outlooks of what is being studied (Maxwell, 2013).

The instrumentation used utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of a mixed-method design. The instrument was available to kindergarten through third-grade teachers from seven school districts located in five counties in Central Missouri. Access

to the teachers was requested from the researcher to the superintendents of the qualifying school districts. The teachers were invited to complete a survey which included 13 closed-ended questions and seven open-ended questions with one additional question for third-grade teachers only. The closed-ended questions allowed the responding teachers to select an answer from options provided while the open-ended questions allowed respondents to voice individualized answers (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The researcher hoped to collect data from teachers regarding their perceptions of homework.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study were kindergarten through third-grade teachers from five counties in Central Missouri. Within each of the five counties chosen, a combination of large and small districts was utilized. Large districts were noted as having a student population from 2,000 to 4,999, while small districts hosted a population of one to 999 students. The researcher selected seven districts to serve as the sample from within the population guidelines for large and small districts. From the seven districts, teachers of students in grades kindergarten through third-grade were e-mailed an internet survey link.

The counties selected were similar in both total county population and in unemployment rates for each county. Figure 1 showed the 2016 population for each of the five counties selected. County A's primary employment opportunities came from retail trade; the local government was the primary source of employment in County B. County C and D's employment opportunities were mainly found in the manufacturing field. The military accounted for the primary source of employment for County E. (University of Missouri Extension, 2017).

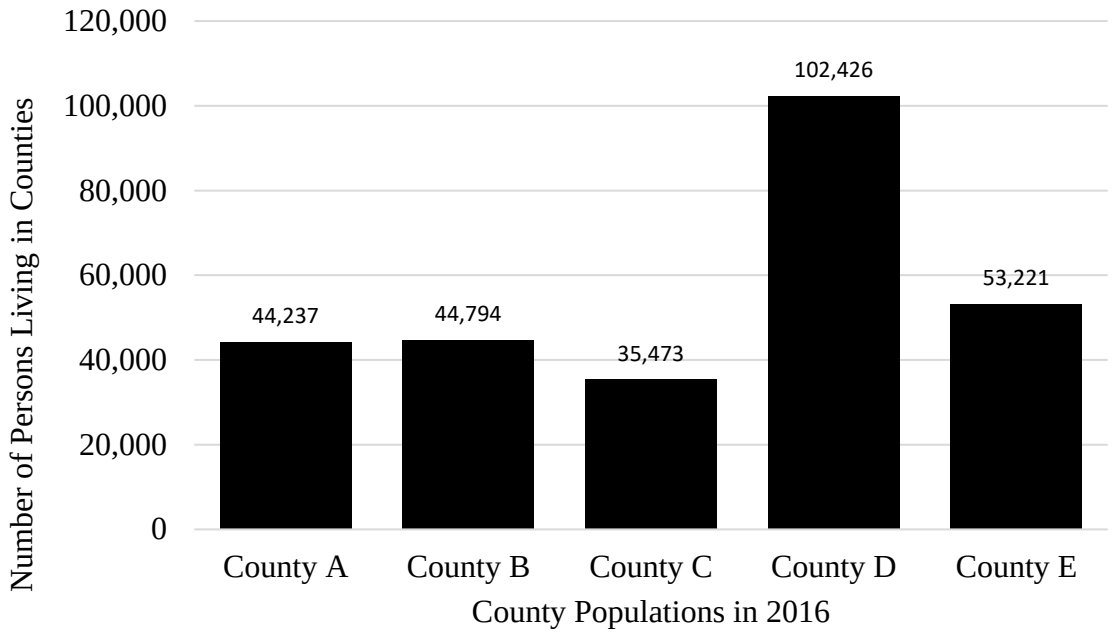

Figure 1. County populations from five counties in Missouri. Adapted from Missouri Kids Count, County Indicators, 2017. Retrieved from missourikidscountdata.org/counties.php.

Figure 2 showed the unemployment rates for all five counties. The unemployment rate for the state of Missouri is included as well for comparison. The state rate of unemployment has stayed steady for the months provided. Four of the five counties selected for the research have all shown a decrease in the unemployment rate with County A showing the largest decline and County D presenting slight fluctuations. The rates included are for the months of January through April 2017 (see Figure 2).

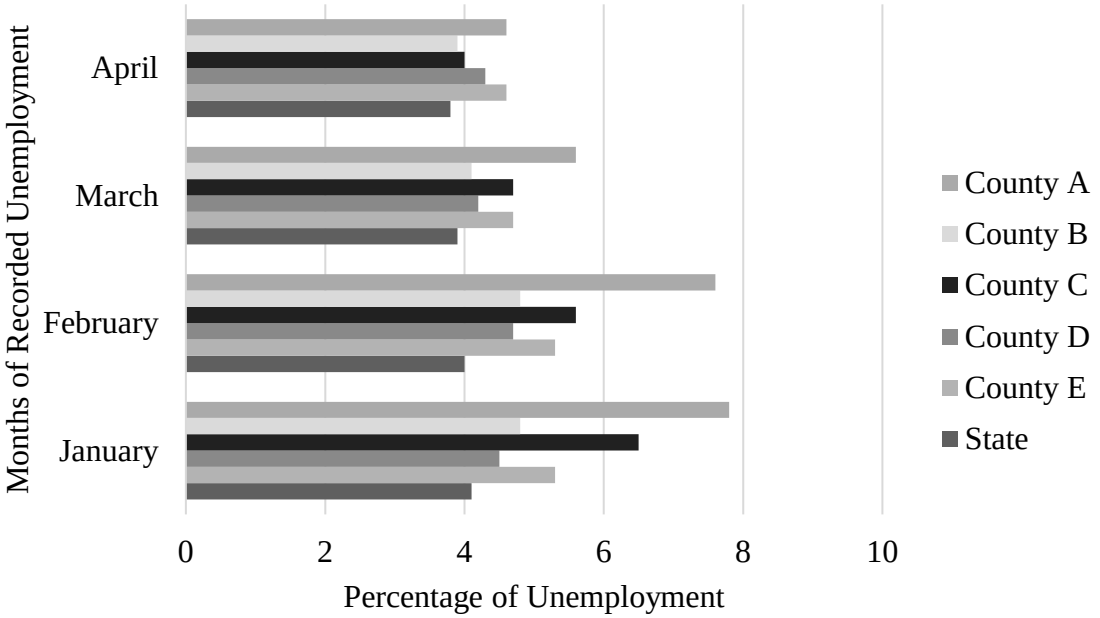

Figure 2. 2017 Unemployment rates for January through April for selected counties and the State of Missouri. Adapted from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Data and Statistics, June 2017 Unemployment Benefits by County and the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, Economy at a glance: Missouri. Retrieved from https://labor.mo.gov/data and https://www.bls.eag/eag.mo.htm.

The seven districts selected to serve as the sample from the population were similar in both the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and in the total student population for kindergarten through 12th grade. Figure 3 illustrated the percentages of students in districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 who were eligible for free and reduced lunches in 2016. The state average for the same time was 51.7 % (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017) (see Figure 3).

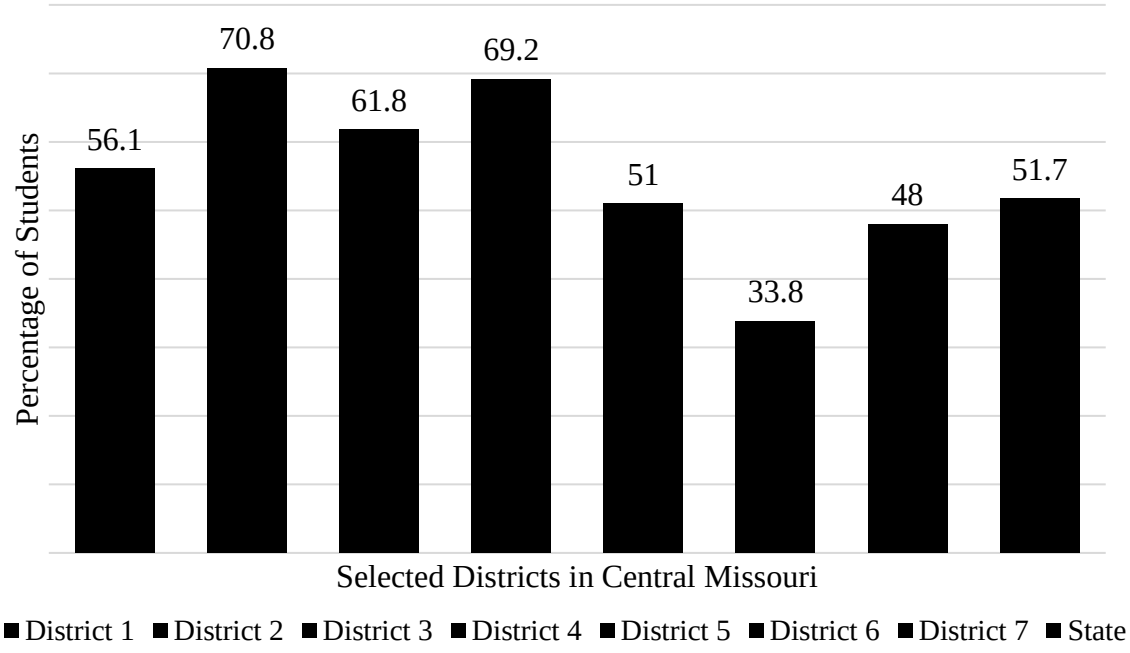

Figure 3. The 2016 free and reduced lunch participants in selected districts in central Missouri. Adapted from Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Comprehensive Data System, 2017, Quick Facts. Retrieved from https://mcds.dese.mo.gov/ quickfacts/SitePages/DistrictInfo.aspx

Figure 4 shows the total student enrollment in kindergarten through 12th grade for each of the districts selected. The large and small districts chosen were comparable in student enrollment size. The large districts encompassed a student population average of 4, 216 students in kindergarten through grade 12. The average student population for the three small districts is 299 students in grades k-12 (see Figure 4).

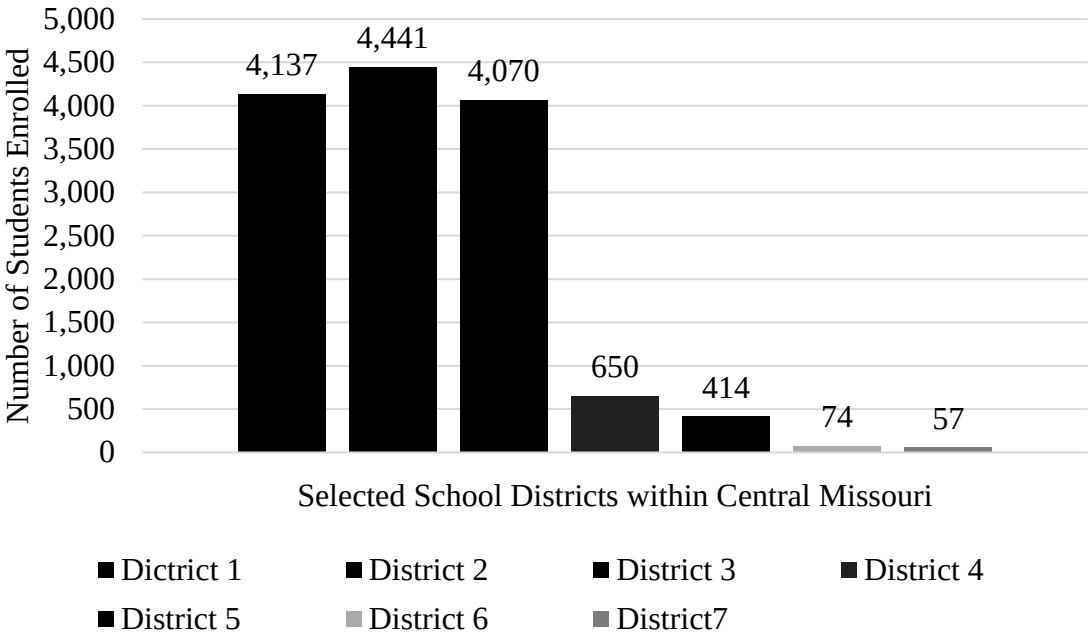

Figure 4. Total student enrollment in Kindergarten through 12th grade for seven districts in central Missouri. Adapted from Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Comprehensive Data Systems, 2017, Quick Facts. Retrieved from https://www.mcds.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/SitePages/DistrictInfo.aspx.

Participants for this study were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling has been used when "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your question and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). Purposive sampling furthermore assisted in achieving representation, as well as in considering the likelihood of access (Maxwell, 2013). For this research project, teacher participants were chosen based on the grade level they taught from kindergarten through third- grade. Teacher professional knowledge related to the student abilities and curriculum standards of working with lower elementary children was a benefit to this

study. The experiences of teachers from diverse elementary schools and districts provided considerable data for the researcher to use to analyze and to evaluate for trends or themes.

Instrumentation

The researcher used surveys to collect data from participants. The instrument was a Google survey (2017) to be completed by all teachers (see Appendix A) of students in kindergarten through third-grade. The teacher surveys were administered through an online survey sent through email.

Survey. The teacher survey was created by Valdez et al. (2009) (see Appendix A). Valdez et al. (2009) designed the survey as a tool for a master's degree project while students at California State University in San Bernardino, California. In the project, researchers explored how the value placed upon homework was different for teachers, parents, and students (Valdez et al., 2009). Permission to utilize the survey was granted to the researcher through e-mail communication with Emilio Murillo, professor in the Teacher Education and Foundations Department, College of Education, California State University, San Bernardino, CA (see Appendix B). The survey consisted of 13 questions using a 4-point Likert scale where 1= Never, 2= Sometimes, 3= Often and where 4= Always on questions three through 12 (Valdez et al., 2009). Question one offered 1= Not at all and 4= More than three times a week. Question 2 has 1 = None and 4 = 20 minutes or more. According to Valdez et al. (2009):

> Questions were asked to determine the frequency of homework, time spent on homework, how often it is turned in, assistance received on homework, assessments of students' attitudes, behavior and motivation towards homework,

how homework is monitored and whether feedback is given to students in order to determine how homework is valued (p. 17).

In reviewing the results on the study, Valdez et al. (2009) discovered a discrepancy on question 2 between the amount of time teachers perceived students spent completing homework and the amount of time spent on homework assignments as perceived by parents and students. Students felt they spent more than an hour, while parents perceived approximately an hour was spent completing homework. However, teachers in the study believed students spent 30 minutes (Valdez et al., 2009). Question 11, which focused on teacher feedback on homework, also provided inconsistent beliefs among teachers, parents, and students (Valdez et al., 2009). Of the parent respondents, 54% felt teachers never provided feedback, while 46% of students believed teachers sometimes provided feedback on homework assignments; however, 100% of teachers reported always providing written comments on homework assignments (Valdez et al., 2009).

As this survey was not widely used in research related to homework, this research project would help support the use of the survey in the future for school officials who wanted to discover the perceptions of homework within their school districts. In addition to the 12 questions created by Valdez et al. (2009), one additional closed-ended question, seven open-ended questions, and one additional open-ended question for third-grade teachers only was provided.

The internet surveys completed by teachers were electronically returned to the researcher upon completion by the participants. Approximately a week and a half after the initial e-mail contact with the teachers a reminder was sent via email including the

same information. Informed consent to participate in the survey was implied by participants upon the submission of the online survey. The survey format was chosen due to the ability to access numerous participants and the low cost involved (Fraenkel et al., 2015). A period of three weeks was allotted for the completion of the online and paper surveys.

An argument toward the reliability of the surveys being employed by the researcher-based on a 4-point Likert-type scale-had previously been made. A research study by Lei Chang (1994) examined the reliability of 4-point and 6-point Likert scale instruments. Since the inception of the Likert scale, researchers have been trying to decide which number of scale points provided the most reliability (Chang, 1994). Through his research, Chang (1994) discovered the 4-point scale offered the greater reliability. Chang's (1994) findings indicated "the number of scale points in a Likert scale affects internal consistency" (p. 212). It was also determined that scale choices increased certain statistical correlations but only to a point in which measurement consistency was reduced (Chang, 1994).

Data Collection

The researcher began the data collection process by making e-mail contact regarding recruitment (see Appendix C) with the superintendents of the seven school districts selected for the study. The initial contact explained the research project and sought permission to contact the classroom teachers in kindergarten through third-grades in the school districts. After approval from the superintendents was granted, an e-mail to the building principal of each school participating in the study was sent (see Appendix D). The researcher notified the building principals of the research project and the

approval granted by the superintendents regarding the e-mail recruitment letters about the Internet survey to the kindergarten through third-grade teachers. Once approval was granted by all parties, an e-mail was sent to the kindergarten through third-grade teachers in each of the buildings (see Appendix E). The e-mail explained the research, and requested consent as well as provided an on-line link to the survey. The completion of the survey served as assumed consent. Respondents were given three weeks to complete the survey. One and a half weeks after the initial e-mail contact with the teachers was made, the researcher sent a second e-mail (see Appendix F) with the same information and survey link to serve as a reminder. At the end of three weeks, the link was no longer available for teachers to access.

Confidentiality of all participants was maintained. Participants were assured all data collected would be held in confidence, and they had the right to withdraw at any time (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Teacher participants were notified via e-mail regarding the consent form and survey. The internet survey was secured online and protected by a confidential username and password. All survey responses were printed to analyze and coded. At the completion of the research study, all printed responses were securely stored to protect confidentiality.

Internal validity. Validity, as defined by Fraenkel et al. (2015), was "the degree to which correct inferences can be made based on results from an instrument" (p. 113). Fraenkel et al. (2015) further explained validity was not just the instrument being used but the process and the group characteristics. Internal validity referred to a relationship between variables which were related but not due to an uncontrolled variable (Fraenkel et al., 2015). A possible threat to the internal validity of this research might have been the

experience of the respondents or the attitudes the respondents have towards the topic (Fraenkel et al, 2015). To lessen the likelihood of this threat, the survey questions were based more on the actions within the classrooms or the homes rather than the participant's opinions. Providing all participants with the same survey minimized any possible threats to the internal validity of this research. Another possible threat or limitation to the validity of this research was the possibility of a small data pool. The researcher worked to alleviate this risk by sending reminder e-mails to the teacher respondents and by seeking respondents from a large population.

Internal reliability. Reliability was defined as the consistency of scores obtained by the researcher (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The survey used by the researcher for this study followed the 4-point Likert scale, which Chang (1994) found to be more beneficial than a 6-point Likert-type scale. A possible concern to the reliability of this research was the motivation, or lack of motivation of the respondents. Keeping the survey short and direct aided in minimizing the motivation issues. The ease of the response choices for the participants was also positive and allowed for greater responses.

Objectivity. Objectivity was defined as the lack of subjective judgments (Fraenkel et al., 2015). The researcher worked to eliminate subjectivity in relation to the characteristics of the participants by using purposeful sampling provided for a more objective study. As the researcher was a lower elementary teacher at the time of the study, the researcher needed to set aside personal beliefs and attitudes to focus on the responses of the participants in order to remain objective and unbiased in the data analysis process.

Ethical considerations. All data received from the participants of the survey

remained confidential. Information from the internet survey was stored on-line during the data collection process. The on-line site was protected by a confidential username and password known only to the researcher. Any paper copies received were coded and stored in a secure location. Once the study was complete, all data collected online and printed was securely stored. None of the participants were harmed, physically or mentally, in the process of completing the surveys or personal interviews. The researcher also participated in on-line training with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research in order to gain knowledge regarding the research process with participants (see Appendix H).

Data Analysis

Once the online survey was no longer available, the researcher calculated the Likert-type scale items to better analyze the data. The opened-ended questions were grouped as to comparable content for both parent and teacher respondents. All replies were assembled into comments, which were related in nature or expressed common themes. Throughout the process of calculating the Likert-type scale items and sorting the open-ended and interview comments, the researcher looked for any trends that emerged. Trends were noted and explored when applicable.

Descriptive statistics. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to describe the gathered information using numerical form or graphs (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Bluman (2013) explained descriptive statistics as "the collection, organization, summarization, and presentation of data" (p. 4). Descriptive statistics were a useful tool in presenting information from the Likert-type scale survey items. Information was collected and presented using a

numerical or graphing format. Much of the data presented was categorical, which indicated the total number found in the categories (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Fraenkel et al. (2015) discussed quantitative data as being "reported in terms of scores" (p. 188).

Inferential statistics. The use of inferential statistics allowed the researcher to make decisions on how likely the results of the sample used was the same for the whole population of participants (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Bluman (2013) explained inferential statistics as "generalizing from samples to populations, performing estimations and hypothesis tests, determining relationships among variables, and making predictions" (p. 4). The researcher used inferential statistics to discover if the relationships considered in the designed research questions were true with the information gathered from the data. Gathering data from a large sample allowed the researcher to make predictions and to generalize the respondent population. The use of the teacher survey lent itself to a study using inferential statistics to determine relationships regarding perceptions of homework use by students.

Qualitative Research. The researcher used qualitative research to assist with the understanding of the open-ended questions. Bluman (2013) stated, qualitative variables could be placed into specific categories based on certain characteristics. Fraenkel et al. (2015) further elaborated that qualitative research was the study of a specific activity or situation. The researcher hoped to discover teacher perceptions on current homework use and quality of homework, which allowed itself to be more of a qualitative study. The researcher followed this ideology by using aspects of a phenomenological study, which Fraenkel et al. (2015) explained allows researchers to explore reactions or perceptions of a phenomenon. In this research study, the phenomenon was homework.

Summary

The mixed-methods design chosen for this research study was guided by the issues of teacher perceptions of homework, possible barriers to homework, and the questions of the size of the school districts impacting the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms in regards to homework. Both qualitative and quantitative research were used to complete the research. Participants were chosen based on purposive sampling. Kindergarten through third-grade teachers from seven school districts within five Central Missouri counties were provided with the opportunity to participate in the study. Participants were offered an on-line survey to complete, which were made available via e-mail to the teachers. Survey data was collected online for the internet surveys. Collected data was securely stored until completion of the research. All data received was coded for privacy and confidentiality.

The problem and purpose for the research have been reiterated in Chapter Three. The instrumentation to be used, surveys, has been explained as well as the steps to be followed for the data collection process. An introduction to the data analysis procedure was included. In Chapter Four, the researcher will provide and discuss the results of this study.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers concerning the use of homework in their classrooms. The use of homework in the classroom has been a source of much debate among various stakeholders, and by means of media and technology, the debate has expanded (Vatterott, 2009). Carr (2013) noted the efficacy of homework is dependent on numerous factors, such as "accommodations, organization, structure of the assignments, technology, home-school communication, and students' home life" (p. 170). To investigate the perceptions of teachers, a survey consisting of open and closed-ended questions was electronically distributed to teachers from grades kindergarten through third from seven school districts, encompassing five counties within Central Missouri. The instrument, which was composed of 13 four-point Likert scale questions and seven open-ended questions, with one additional question for third-grade teachers only, was designed to address the following three key research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding homework?

2. What barriers, (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework, or (d) the nature of the assignments, inhibit student completion of homework the most?

3. In what ways does the size of the school district impact the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

Demographic Data

The recruitment letter (see Appendix A) and survey link were electronically sent

to 190 kindergarten through third-grade teachers in seven school districts, representing five counties in Central Missouri. Of the 190 requests for voluntary participation, 24.74% (*n*=47) educators completed the online survey. The following demographic data was reported by the survey respondents. Of the respondents, 85.11% (*n*=40) noted employment within a large school district, while the remaining 14.89% (*n*=7) were affiliated with a small school district. In this study, small school districts had a student population of one to 999 students, while large school districts consisted of 2,000 to 4,999 total students. Out of the 47 respondents, 93.62% (*n*=44) were female, with three males participating in the research study. A significant number of respondents held advanced degrees. Over half of the participants, 55.32% (*n*=26), had acquired a master's degree, while 17.02% (*n*=8) had obtained specialist degrees and 2.13% (*n*=1) had earned a doctorate degree. Only 25.53% (*n*=12) of respondents held a bachelor's degree.

The demographic category, years of teaching experience, was divided into six groups (see Table 1). Most respondents, 93.62% (*n*=44) had been in the field of education for more than five years. Only two of the respondents were first-year teachers. Teachers who had been in the classroom for 6-10 years made up 27.66% (*n*=13) of the respondents. Both the 11- to 15-year range and 21 or more years of experience categories had 12 participants each.

Table 1

Participants' Years of Experience by Percentages

Years of experience	*n*	Percentage
1	2	4.26%
2-5	3	6.38%
6-10	13	27.66%
11-15	12	25.53%
16-20	5	10.64%
21 or more	12	25.53%
Total	47	100.00%

Note. Data collected from survey results.

The number of students the kindergarten through third-grade teachers had serviced in their classrooms varied among the survey participants. Of the educator respondents, 53.19% (*n*=25) stated the student populations within their classroom as being 21to 25 students, while 36.17% (*n*=17) of educators had classrooms with 16 to 20 students. Only four participants, 8.51% (*n*=4), noted having 15 students or fewer and one teacher had 26 or more students in class.

When reporting the grade level taught, the respondents were evenly distributed among the four grade levels: (a) kindergarten, (b) first-grade, (c) second-grade, and (d) third-grade (see Table 2). Teachers reported to be teaching first-grade made up 23.40% (*n*=11) of the respondents. Kindergarten, second-grade, and third-grade each had 25.53%

(*n*=36) of the respondents. This made the distribution among the grade levels surveyed somewhat equitable.

Table 2

Participants' Grade Levels Taught by Percentages

Grade levels taught	*n*	Percentages
Kindergarten	12	25.53%
First Grade	11	23.40%
Second Grade	12	25.53%
Third Grade	12	25.53%
Total	47	100.00%

Note. Data collected from survey results.

Analysis of Survey Data

The results of the survey completed by kindergarten through third-grade educators were examined through total responses received and through small school district and large school district designations. A total of 47 educator responses were noted. Of the total respondents, 85.11% (*n*=40) were from large school districts, while 14.89% (*n*=7) were employed with small school districts. Survey questions numbered 1 through 13 were closed-ended questions related to educator perceptions of homework where respondents were limited in their answer choices. Questions numbered 14 through 19 were open-ended questions related to educator perceptions of homework, and respondents were allowed an opportunity to respond to questions with more detail.

Question Number 20 requested participants to rank possible barriers to students completing homework at home. The final question was an open-ended question for third-grade teachers due to their experiences with students who annually participated in the third-grade MAP assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

The closed-ended survey questions were based on a four-point scale. The four-point scale was recommended by Chang (1994) based upon greater reliability and consistency. In Question Number One, how often homework is assigned, the four response options included (a) not at all, (b) once to twice a week, (c) three times a week, and (d) more than three times a week regarding the frequency of assigned homework. With the second survey question, how much time students should spend on homework, the available selections were (a) none, (b) up to 10 minutes, (c) 11 to 19 minutes, or (d) 20 minutes or more. The remaining closed-ended questions allowed the following response choices: (a) never, (b) sometimes, (c) often and (d) always. The purpose for the four-point scale was to allow for comparisons of teacher perceptions through mean scores and standard deviations.

Survey Question 1. ***How often do you assign homework?*** This question allowed respondents to express their actions regarding the frequency of homework assigned to students. A total of 45 of the 47 respondents chose to respond to this question. The available choices to the question were (a) not at all, (b) once or twice a week, (c) three times a week, and (d) more than three times a week. The responses to this item were varied among respondents. Of the respondents who chose to reply, 40% (*n*=18) opted to assign homework once or twice a week (see Figure 5). Homework was not assigned to any students as reported by 26.67% (*n*=12) of educators surveyed. The

response option of three times a week was selected by 13.33% (*n*=6) of survey respondents.

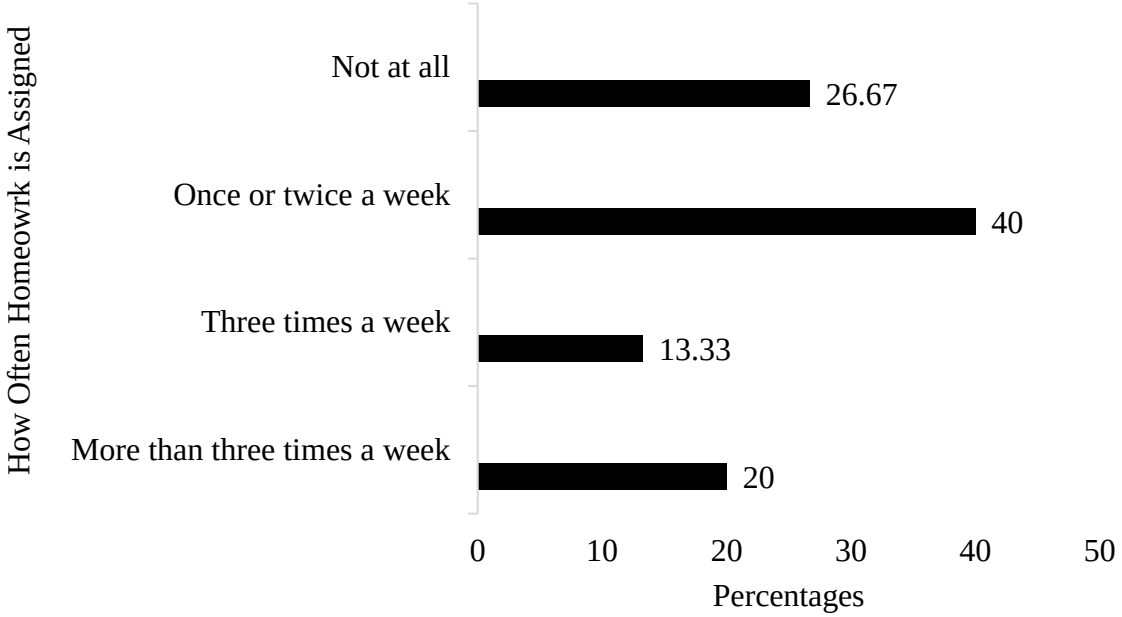

Figure 5. Frequency of assigned homework as reported by 44 kindergarten through third-grade teachers. Data collected from survey results.

Within small school districts, 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district employees who responded to the survey reported not assigning homework at all. An additional 42.86% (*n*=3) of the respondents from small school districts assigned homework once or twice a week. This compared to 23.68% (*n*=9) of large school district employees who did not assign homework at all, and 39.47% (*n*=15) of participants from large school districts who assigned homework once or twice a week. A respondent from small school districts, 14.29% (*n*=1), reported he or she assigned homework tasks three times a week, while 13.16% (*n*=5) of large school district respondents assigned homework three times a

week, and 23.68% (*n*=9) of large school districts participants assigned homework more than three times a week (see Table 3 and Figure 6).

Table 3

Participants' Perceptions of Assigning Homework in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Not at all	Once or twice a week	Three times a week	More than three times a week
Small School District	42.86%	42.86%	14.29%	*
Large School District	23.68%	39.47%	13.16%	23.68%

Note. * denotes no response given. Data collected from survey results.

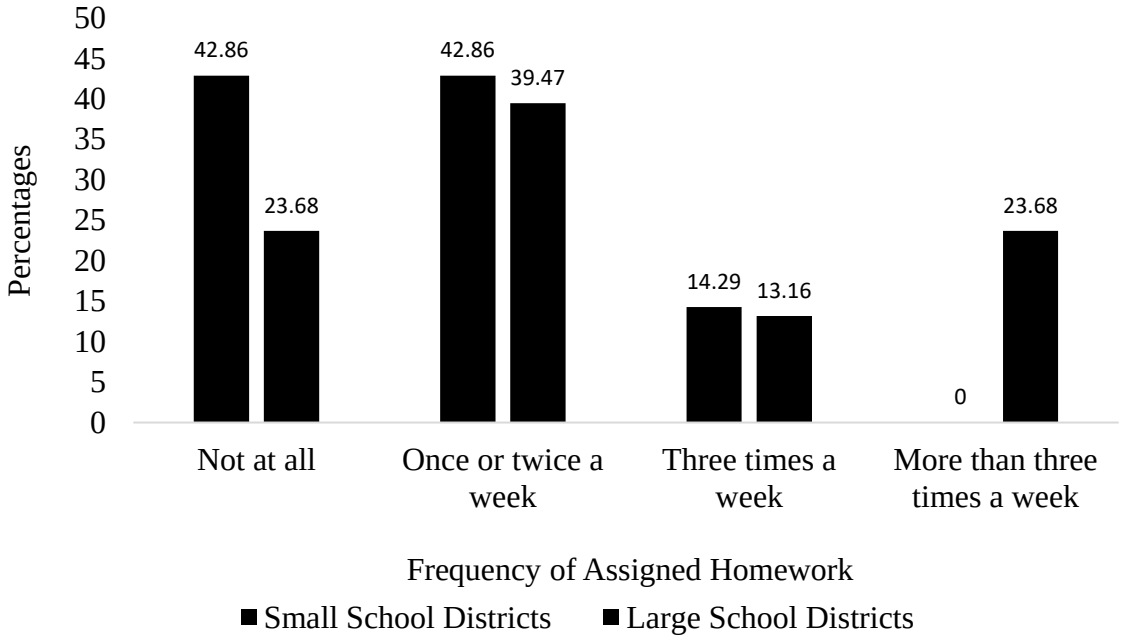

Figure 6. Assigned homework in small and large school districts as reported by 7 small school district respondents and 38 large school district respondents.

Survey Question 2. ***How much time do you expect your students to work on homework?*** Educators were asked to estimate the amount of time they anticipated students needed to complete assigned homework tasks at home. The response choices of (a) none, (b) up to 10 minutes, (c) 11 to 19 minutes, and (d) over 20 minutes were available for participants from which to choose. Responding to this question were 46 out of the total 47 participants. Educators who expected students to be able to complete their assigned tasks in up to 10 minutes totaled 43.47% (*n*=20) of the teacher respondents (see Figure 7). Only 8.70% (*n*=4) of responding educators assumed students would spend 20 minutes or more working on school work at home. The option of not expecting students to spend any time at home working on school assignments was selected by 28.26% (*n*=13) of respondents.

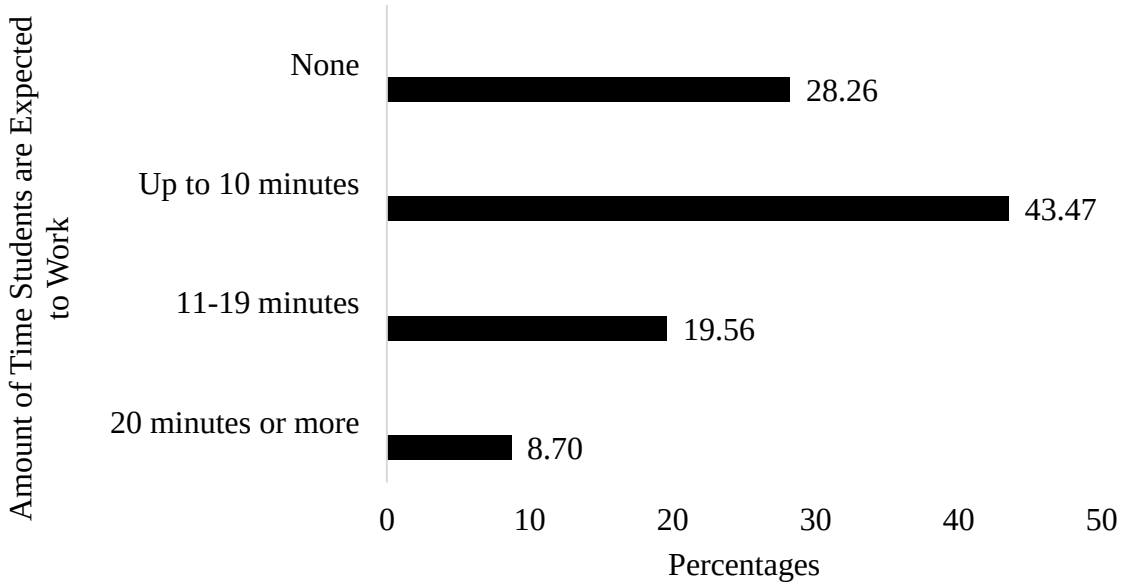

Figure 7. Expected time for students to complete homework. Teachers' expectations on the amount of time students need to complete homework assignments. Data collected from survey results.

When comparing responses to this item from large and small school district respondents, the following data was collected. Students were not expected to spend any time completing homework by 25.64% (*n*= 10) of educators in large school districts, while 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district teachers did not expect students to spend any time completing homework (see Table 4). The respondents from small school districts, 57.14% (*n*=4) expected students to spend up to 10 minutes completing homework tasks, and 41.03% (*n*=16) of large school district participants anticipated the same. Students were expected to spend 11 to 19 minutes on homework by 23.08% (*n*=9) of large school district teachers. Four of the large school district respondents, or 10.26% (*n*=4), expected students to spend 20 minutes or more on homework. There were no small school district respondents who expected students to spend more than 20 minutes on assigned tasks.

Table 4

Participants' Perceptions of Homework Completion in Small and Large School Districts

District size	None	Up to 10 minutes	11-19 minutes	20+ minutes
Small School District	42.86%	57.14%	*	*
Large School District	25.64%	41.03%	23.08%	10.26%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 3. ***On average, how often do your students turn in their homework?*** Educators were asked about the regularity of students who fulfilled the

requirement of turning in homework tasks. Respondents were able to select from the options of (a) never, (b) sometimes, (c) often, and (d) always. Just under half of the respondents, or 48.89% (*n*=22), reported their students turned in homework assignments often (see Figure 8). Only a small percentage of respondents, 8.89% (*n*=4), stated students always turned in homework tasks. The option of "some students never turned in homework" was selected by 28.89% (*n*=13) of respondents. According to 13.33% (*n*=6) of the survey respondents, some of their students "sometimes" turned in homework assignments.

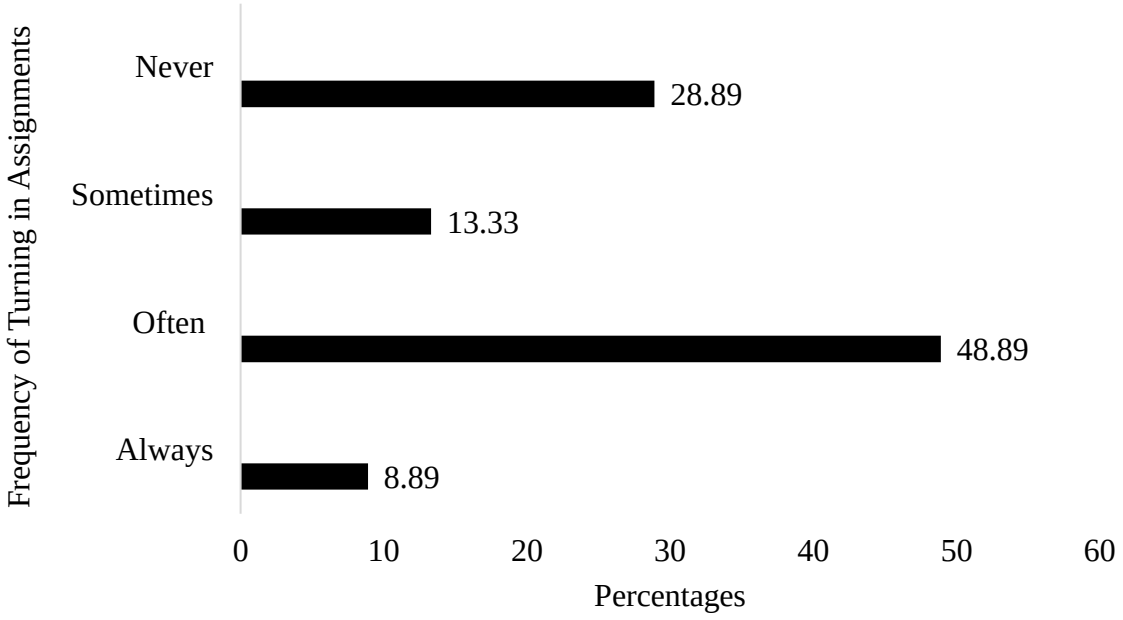

Figure 8. Students turning in homework assignments as reported by classroom teachers. Data collected from survey results.

When responding to the survey question regarding students turning in homework assignments, 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district participants reported some students

never turned in homework, while 26.32% (*n*=10) of large school district participants reported the same. Of the small school district respondents, 42.86% (*n*=3) replied their students often turned in homework, while 14.29% (*n*=1) of the small school district participants stated students always turned in homework (see Table 5). Within the large school districts, 7.89% (*n*=3) of respondents stated students always turned in homework, and 50.00% (*n*=19) of educators noted students often turned in assignments completed at home. Also, 15.79% (*n*=6) of participants recognized students sometimes turned in their homework (see Table 5).

Table 5

Participants' Perceptions of the Frequency of Assignments Returned in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	42.86%	*	42.86%	14.29%
Large School Districts	26.32%	15.79%	50.00%	7.89%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 4. ***How often do your students complete their homework?***

Teacher respondents were requested to express the probability of most students completing homework that was assigned. Over half of the educators, or 55.56% (*n*=25),

claimed a frequency of students who often completed homework, while 6.67% (*n*=3) believed students always completed the assigned homework tasks (see Figure 9).

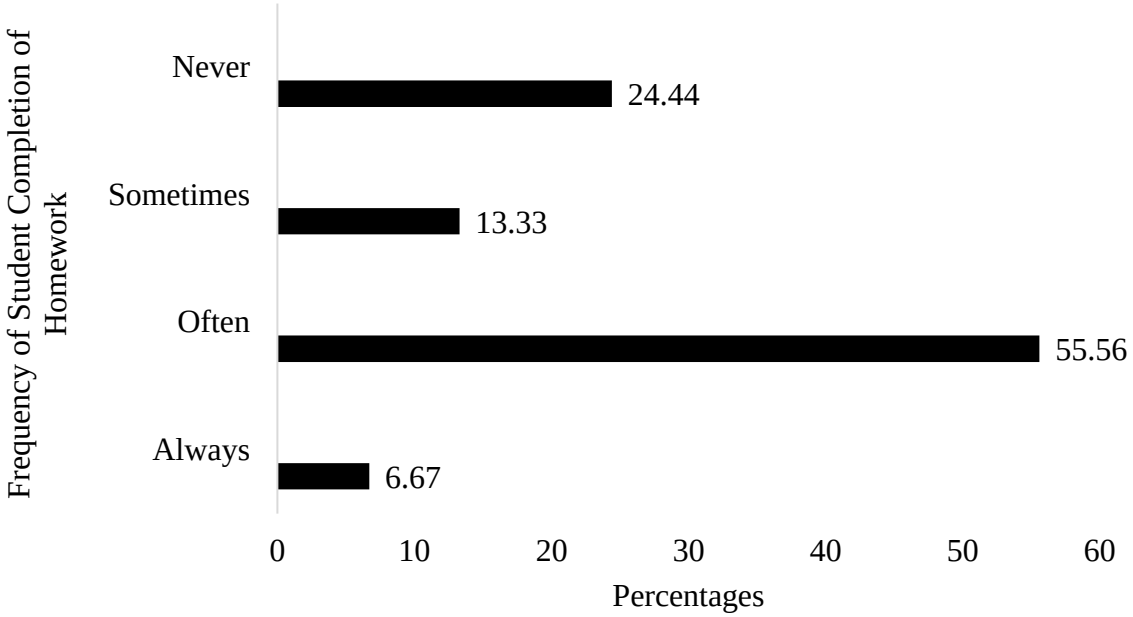

Figure 9. Student homework completion. Percentages of teachers' perceptions of homework completion. Data collected from survey results.

There were discrepancies between the responses from small and large school districts regarding this item. When reporting on students completing their homework, 28.57% (*n*=2) of small school district respondents stated students always completed homework as compared to 2.63% (*n*=1) of large school district respondents (see Table 6). Of the large school district participants, 57.89% (*n*=22) noted students often completed homework tasks, while 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district participants reported the same. Approximately a quarter of both small and large school district educators noted students never completed homework (see Table 6).

Table 6

Participants' Perceptions of Homework Completion in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	28.57%	*	42.86%	28.57%
Large School Districts	23.68%	15.79%	57.89%	2.63%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 5. ***How often do you find students sharing homework assignments?*** The concern of students sharing homework tasks with peers was addressed in Question Five. The majority of the survey respondents were in agreement on this matter. Of survey respondents, 93.33% (*n*=42) reported they had never caught students sharing homework assignments. Two educators stated they had sometimes found students sharing homework. Interestingly, only one teacher responded as having always found students sharing homework (see Figure 10).

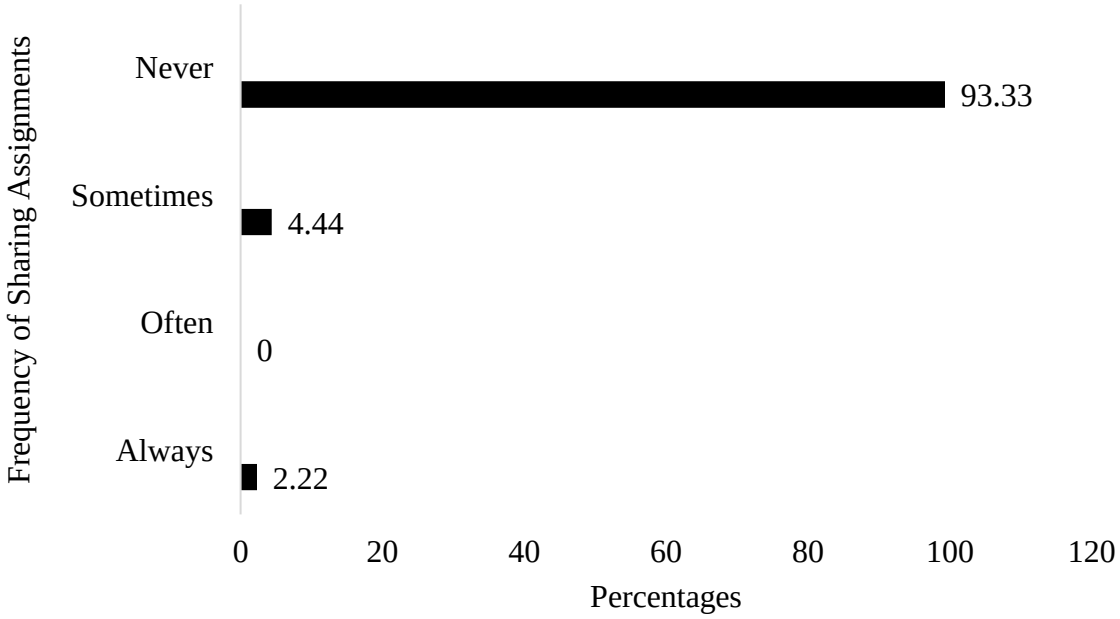

Figure 10. Perceptions of students sharing homework assignments. Percentages of students sharing homework as perceived by educators surveyed. Data collected from survey results.

The responses from both large and small school districts were similar. In small school districts, 85.71% (*n*=6) of participants reported they had never found students sharing homework and 14.29% (*n*=1) of the small school district educators stated they had always found students sharing homework (see Table 7). The response choice of never had found students sharing homework was selected by 94.74% (*n*=36) of large school district respondents, while a small percentage of large district teachers had sometimes found students sharing assignments completed at home (see Table 7).

Table 7

Participants' Perceptions of Sharing Homework in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	85.7%	*	*	14.3%
Large School Districts	94.7%	5.3%	*	*

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 6. ***Do you expect students to receive help with their homework?*** The expectation as to whether students received parental or tutoring assistance on homework tasks was the subject of this survey question. The educators surveyed varied in their responses as to whether they anticipated students received additional help from others with their homework. A total of 44.44% (*n*=20) of respondents sometimes expected students to receive help, and 20% (*n*=9) of respondents replied "always" to this question (see Figure 11). The option choice of teachers "often expected" students to receive additional help on homework assignments was selected by 20 % (*n*=9) of the respondents.

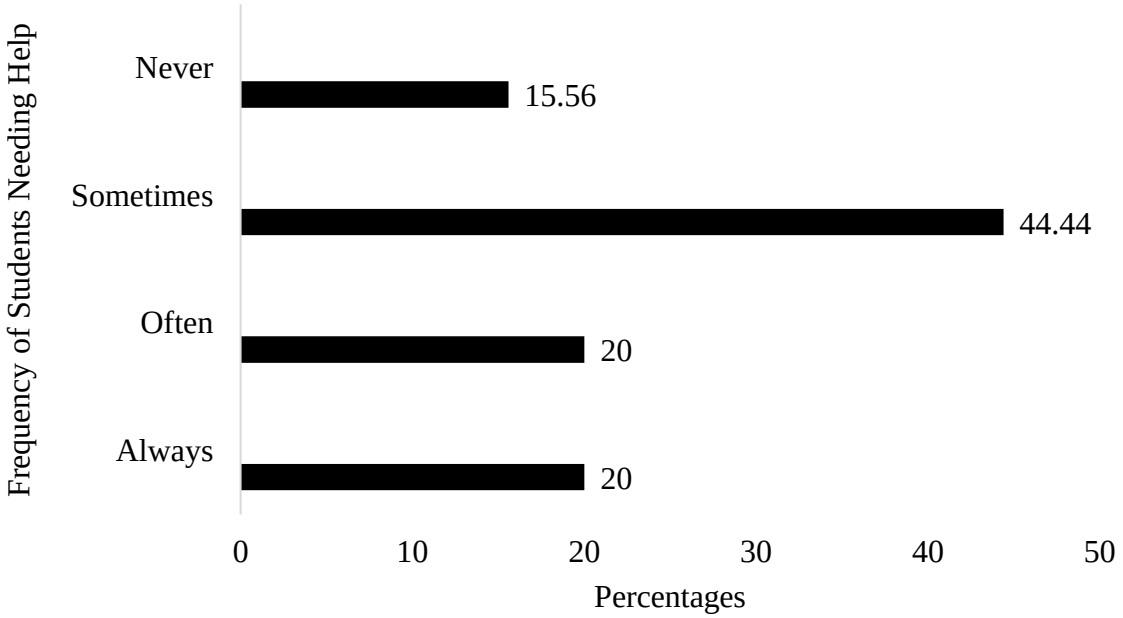

Figure 11. Expectations for students receiving help with homework tasks. Data collected from survey results.

When reporting the responses of teachers from small and large schools to this item, there were significant differences in their perceptions. Less than half of small school district participants, or 42.86% (*n*=3), always expected students to receive help when completing homework assignments, which compared to 15.79% (*n*=6) of large school district respondents (see Table 8). Teachers at both small and large school districts expected students to receive assistance on homework tasks sometimes, at 42.86% (*n*=3) and 44.74% (*n*=17), respectively.

Table 8

Participants' Perceptions of Expected Homework Assistance in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	14.29%	42.86%	*	42.86%
Large School Districts	15.78%	44.74%	23.68%	15.79%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 7. ***Do you feel obligated to assign homework?*** Educators were asked to respond to the extent to which they felt an obligation to assign homework to their students. Of the participants, 75.56% (*n*=34) responded to this question that they did not feel obligated to assign homework. Less than 5% (*n*=2) of the survey respondents always felt obligated to assign homework (see Figure 12). The option choice of sometimes was selected by 20% (*n*=9) of survey respondents, who reported that from time to time felt obligated to assign homework. There were no respondents who said they often believed they had an obligation to assign homework to their students.

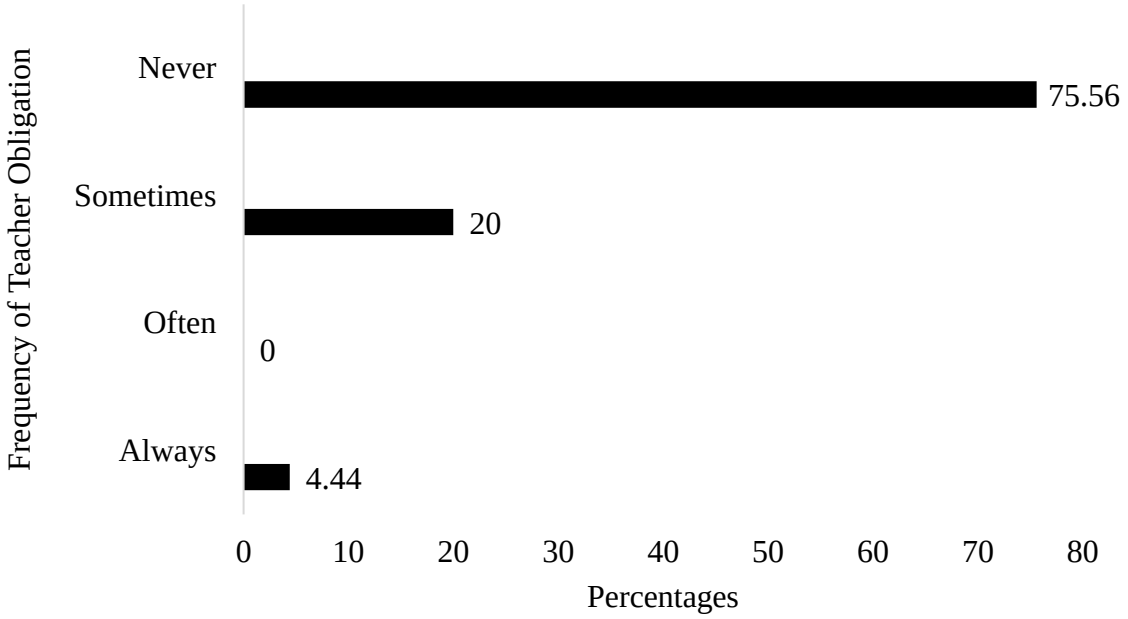

Figure 12. Teacher obligations to assign homework. Teachers' perceptions of the obligation to assign homework. Data collected from survey results.

Teacher perceptions of whether they felt an obligation to assign homework to their students depended upon the size of the school district with which they were employed, according to the data collected from this survey. The small school district respondents, at 100% (*n*=7), stated they never felt obligated to assign homework to their students (see Table 9). In the large school districts, 71.05% (*n*=27) of participants never felt obligated to assign homework, while 23.68% (*n*=9) of respondents sometimes felt obligated to assign homework tasks (see Table 9).

Table 9

Participants' Perceptions of Obligation to Assign Homework in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School District	100%	*	*	*
Large School District	71%	23.70%	*	5.30%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 8. ***Does your assigned homework correlate with your grade level standards?*** The Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) have described the skills and knowledge Missouri students need at each grade level and within each course (MODESE, 2017). Educational leaders designed the MLS to prepare Missouri students for college or post-secondary training success (MODESE, 2017). Of the educator participants in this study, 71.11% (*n*=32) reported their homework assignments always correlated to statewide grade-level standards (see Figure 13). A much smaller percentage of teachers were divided between the remaining responses of never, often, and sometimes had assigned homework which correlated with the grade-level standards required by the state.

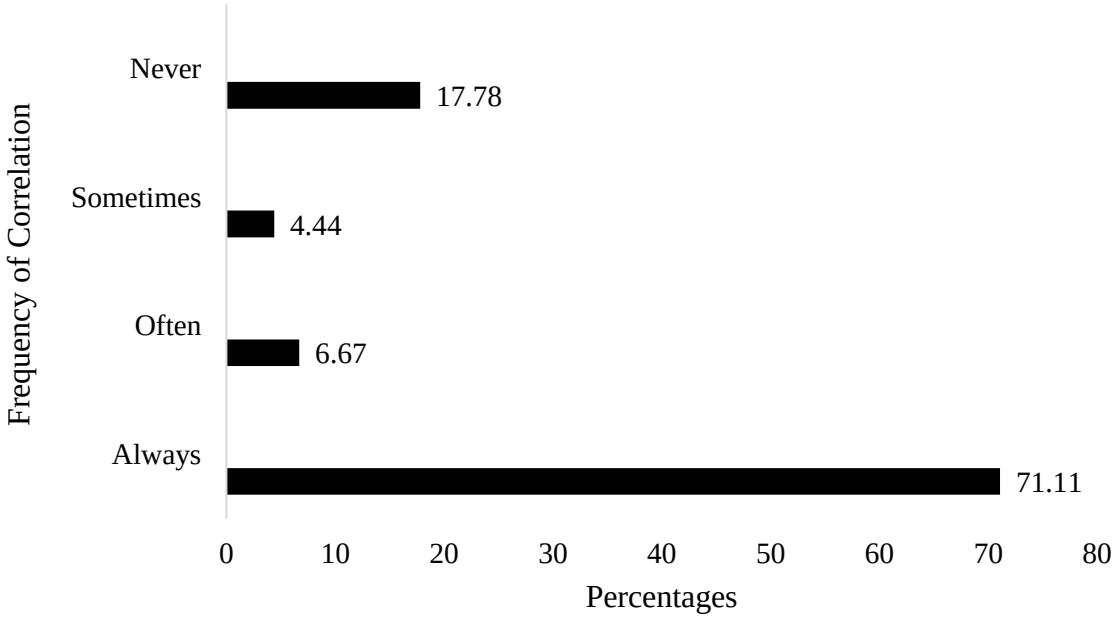

Figure 13. Correlation of homework with grade-level standards. Teachers' perceptions of the correlation between homework assignments and grade-level standards.

In their responses to correlating homework with grade-level standards, both large and small school districts were comparable. In small school districts, 71.43% (*n*=5) of respondents stated homework assignments always correlated with grade-level standards. An almost equal percentage of large school district respondents, 71.05% (*n*=27), also noted homework assignments always correlated with grade-level standards (see Table 10). Small school district participants at 14.29% (*n*=1) and large school district participants, 18.42% (*n*=7) noted homework assignments never correlated with grade-level standards. Survey participants from large school districts, 2.63% (*n*=1) of the participants said they sometimes correlated homework assignments with grade-level standards. There were no small school district respondents who selected the option of "homework often correlated with grade level standards."

Table 10

Participants' Perceptions of Homework Correlating with Grade Level Standards in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	14.29%	14.29%	*	71.43%
Large School Districts	18.42%	2.63%	7.89%	71.05%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 9. ***How often do you monitor homework completion?***

Teachers replied to Question Nine regarding the frequency with which they monitored the completion of their students' homework. Of the total number of respondents, 44 of the 47 participants chose to respond to this question. Less than half of the respondents, 43.18% (*n*=19), always monitored whether homework was completed (see Figure 14). Homework completion was never monitored by 20.45% (*n*=9) of participants. Homework completion was often monitored by 15.91% (*n*=7) of survey respondents. The option of sometimes monitoring homework was selected by 20.45% (*n*=9) of teacher survey respondents.

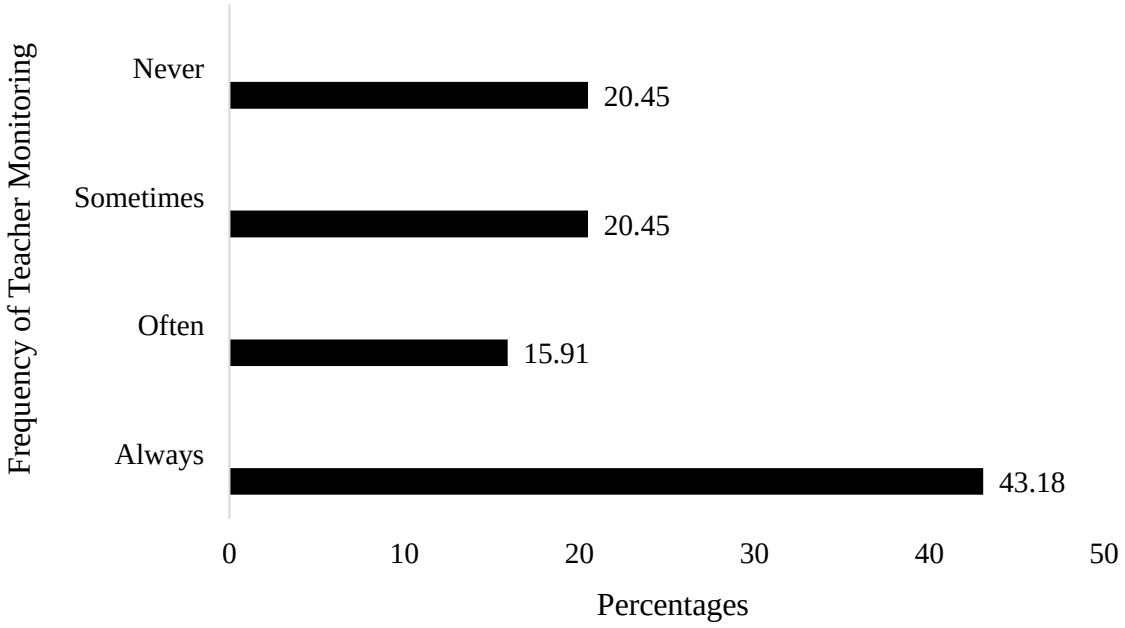

Figure 14. Teacher monitoring of homework completion. Data collected from survey results.

Responses to this question from teachers at small and large school districts showed 57.14% (*n*=4) of small school district participants always monitored students' completion of homework. A majority of large school district respondents, or 40.54% (*n*=15), reported to always monitoring homework completion. Survey respondents who stated they never monitored student completion of homework represented 28.57% (*n*=2) of small school district teachers. Large school district teachers, or 18.92% (*n*=7), stated they never monitored student completion of homework (see Table 11). An obvious finding was many teachers in both groups reported they always monitored homework completion.

Table 11

Participants' Perception of Monitoring Homework Completion in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School District	28.57%	*	14.29%	57.14%
Large School District	18.92%	24.32%	16.22%	40.54%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 10. ***Do you expect parents/guardians to check students' homework?*** This survey item addressed the teachers' expectations related to parents checking their children's homework. There were 45 of the total 47, or 95.74%, of survey participants who chose to respond to this question. Of the participating teacher respondents, 37.78% (*n*=17) always expected parents or guardians to check their children's homework (see Figure 15). Only 15.56% (*n*=7) of teacher respondents never expected parents or guardians to check their children's homework (see Figure 15). According to the survey results, 26.67% (*n*=12) of survey respondents sometimes expected parents to check the homework assignments of respective children. The expectation in which parents often checked their children's homework was held by 20% (*n*=9) of survey participants.

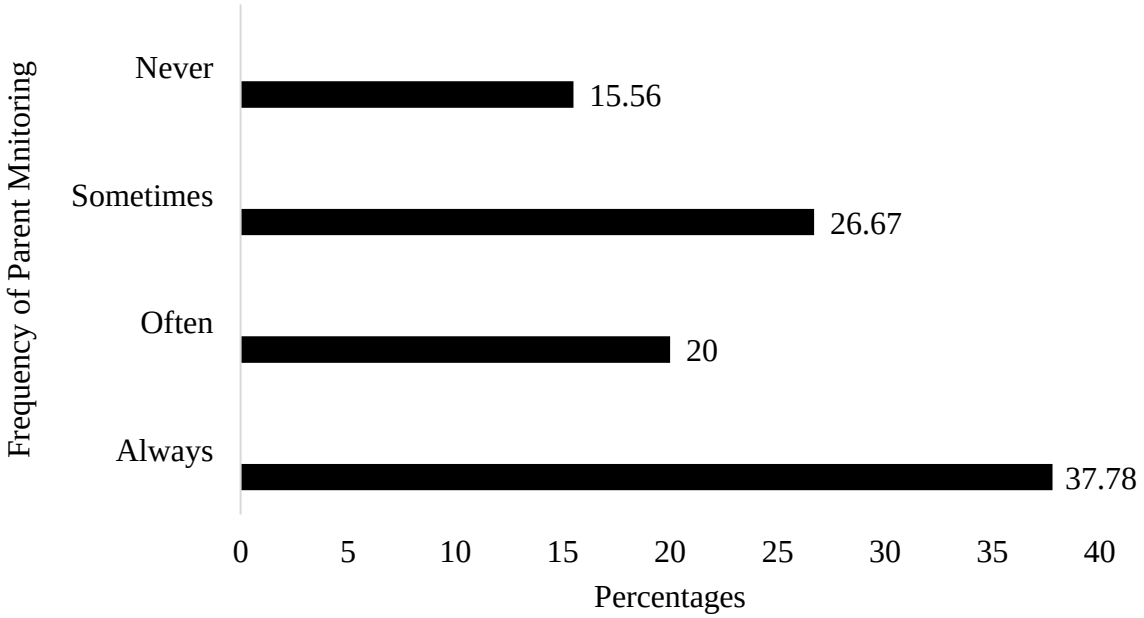

Figure 15. Teachers' expectations of parents checking student's homework. Data collected from survey results.

Of the respondents from small school districts, 57.14% (*n*=4) of participants expected parents or guardians to always check students' homework. Large school district respondents, 34.21% (*n*=13), expected the same (see Table 12). Small and large school district respondents reported similar responses to the choice of never expected parents or guardians to check student homework with 14.29% (*n*=1) and 15.79% (*n*=6) respectively (see Table 12). It appeared the responses by small school districts to this item were somewhat evenly distributed among the choice options.

Table 12

Participants' Perceptions of Homework Checked by Parents or Guardians in Small and Large School Districts

District Size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School Districts	14.29%	28.57%	*	57.14%
Large School Districts	15.79%	26.32%	23.68%	34.21%

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 11. ***Do you give feedback to students on their homework?***

Teacher participants were asked about whether they provided students with feedback regarding homework tasks. When responding to the survey question regarding teacher feedback, 31.11% (*n*=14) of respondents always presented feedback to students on their homework. Less than one-fifth of teacher respondents, 17.78% (*n*=8) reported they never offered feedback. The survey option of "sometimes," regarding teachers providing feedback to students on their homework, was selected by 26.67% (*n*=12) of teacher respondents. An almost equal number of teacher participants, 24.44% (*n*=11) chose the option of "often" for providing feedback to students on homework (see Figure 16).

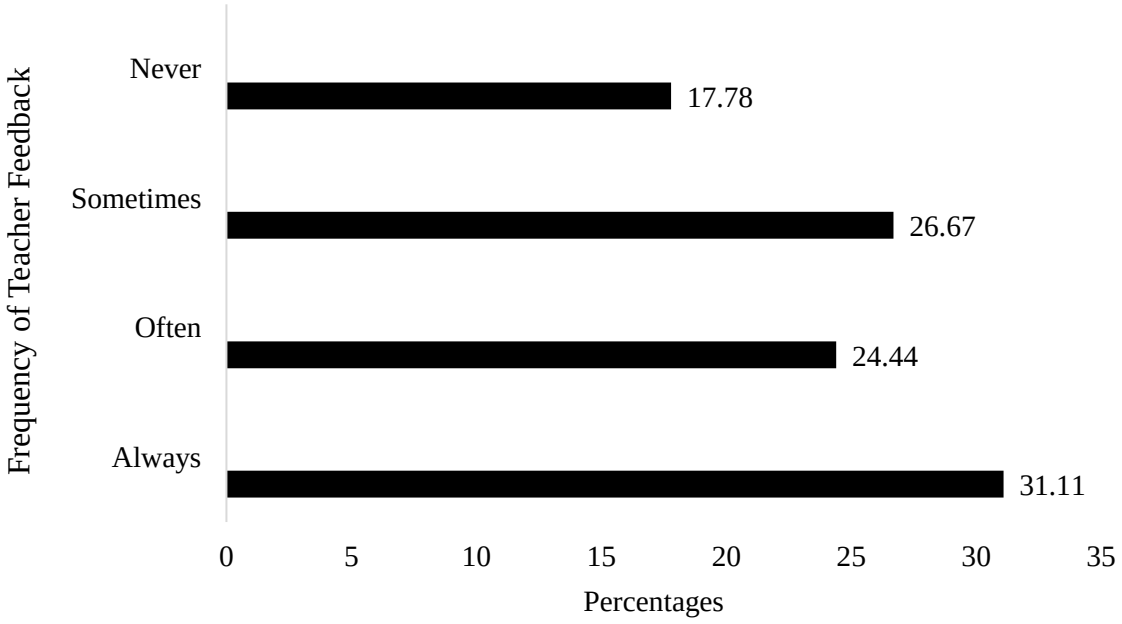

Figure 16. Teachers' feedback on student homework. Data collected from survey results.

Concerning teacher feedback on homework assignments, there was a large discrepancy between small and large school district responses to this item. This was particularly true when teachers responded to the choice of always providing feedback on student homework. Some participants from small school districts, 71.43% (*n*=5), reported they always supplied feedback to students on their homework. Only 23.68% (*n*=9) of large school district educators reported they always afforded feedback to students on homework (see Table 13).

Table 13

Participants' Perceptions on Providing Homework Feedback in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School District	14.29%	14.29%	*	71.43%
Large School District	18.42%	28.95%	28.95%	23.68%

Note. * denoted no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 12. ***Do you like assigning homework?*** This survey question gauged the participating teachers' personal opinions regarding their pleasure in assigning homework to students. Participants were asked if they never liked to assign homework, if they sometimes liked to assign homework, if they often liked to assign homework, or if they always liked to assign homework. Out of the 47 total survey respondents, 46 participants responded to this question. Just under half of the respondents, or 47.82% (*n*=22), stated they sometimes liked assigning homework (see Figure 17). A considerable number of participants, or 39.13% (*n*=18), stated they never liked assigning homework. Only a small percentage of teacher respondents noted they "always," 4.35% (*n*=2), or "often," 8.70% (*n*=4), were pleased to assign homework to students.

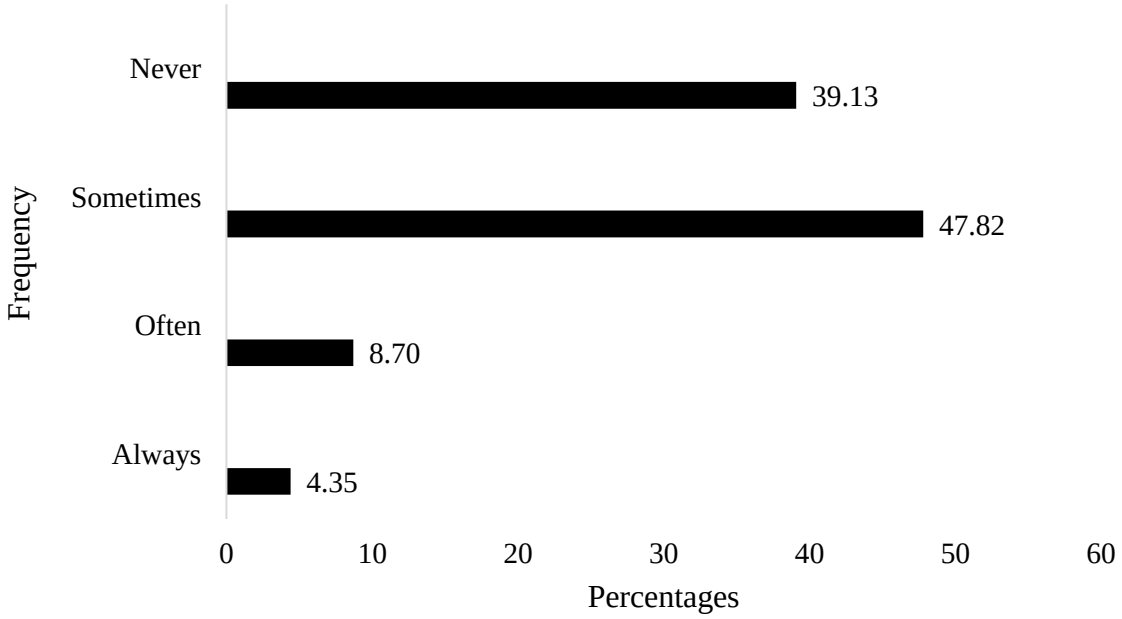

Figure 17. Teachers' opinions of assigning homework. Data collected from survey results.

Less than 3% (*n*=1) of large school district participants stated they always liked to assign homework. Participants from small school districts, 14.29% (*n*=1), indicated the same result of having always liked to assign homework to students (see Table 14). In small school districts, 42.86% (*n*=3) of participants never liked to assign homework. Many participants from large school districts, 38.46% (*n*=15), never liked to assign homework. Survey results showed small school district respondents were fairly varied in their option choices. Over half of the large school district survey participants selected they sometimes liked to assign homework (see Table 14).

Table 14

Participants' Perceptions of Appeal of Assigning Homework in Small and Large School Districts

District size	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Small School District	42.86%	28.57%	14.29%	14.29%
Large School District	38.46%	51.28%	7.69%	2.56%

Note. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 13. ***How many of your students are retained on a yearly basis?*** The final closed-ended survey question focused on the number of student retentions in each teacher's classroom on a yearly basis. All survey respondents chose to respond to this question. The majority of the respondents, 70.21% (*n*=33), reported none of their students were retained on a yearly basis. The category of one to two students retained on a yearly basis was chosen by 29.78% (*n*=14) of survey respondents. The other categories, three to four students retained on a yearly basis and five or more students retained on a yearly basis, were not selected by any of the teacher participants (see Figure 18).

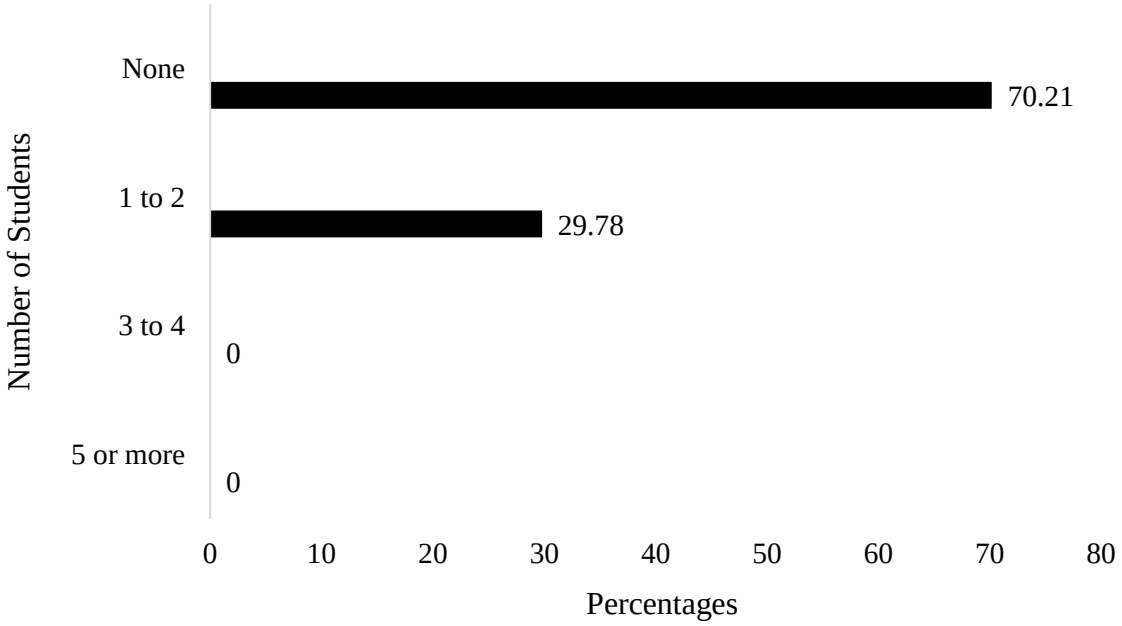

Figure 18. Number of students retained on a yearly basis. Data collected from survey results.

In response to the survey question of the number of students retained on a yearly basis within the responding teachers' classrooms, 71.43% (*n*=5) of small school district participants noted having no student retentions, and 28.57% (*n*=2) of participants responded to having one or two student retentions. Large school district respondents were comparable with 70% (*n*=28) of those responding with no student retentions, and 30% (*n*=12) of participants having one or two student retentions in a year (see Table 15).

Table 15

Participants' Perceptions of Student Retentions on a Yearly Basis in Small and Large School Districts

District size	0	1-2 Students Retained	3-4 Students Retained	5 or More Students Retained
Small School Districts	71.43%	28.57%	*	*
Large School Districts	70%	30%	*	*

Note. * denotes no response. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 14. ***What situations or resources would your students need at home to complete their homework assignments?*** Educator expectations for supplies or resources needed by students were addressed in this survey question. Of the 45 out of 47 respondents who replied to this survey question, nearly half, 24 respondents, stated basic writing utensils, such as pencils, pens and markers, were requirements for at-home completion of school work. Other school supplies, such as paper, crayons, and books to read, were often mentioned. Nine participants stated students would need a parent at home either to read to or listen to the student read, as well to assist the students with following directions if needed. One participant noted the need for a quiet environment to be successful in completing tasks at home. Technological devices were deemed important for two respondents, while dice and other manipulatives were noted as being necessary for academic success on homework for another respondent. One respondent stated students would need to be able to read to complete homework.

When looking at this survey question with small school district teachers input, basic supplies (i.e. books, pencils, paper) were requirements, as well as parental support. Large school district survey respondents required books to read, writing utensils, and paper as resources necessary for students to complete homework at home. Several large school district respondents stated technological devices would be needed to complete homework tasks at home. The responses to this survey question by teachers from both small and large school districts suggested the necessity of writing utensils, paper, and books as being deemed necessary to homework completion success.

Survey Question 15. ***Where do you think your students complete their homework while at home?*** Determining the location students chose to complete assigned work while at home was the focus of Question Number 15. Out of the 47 total participants, 44 chose to reply to this survey question. Most teachers believed homework was completed in the home. Just under half of the participants believed the kitchen table was chosen by most students to complete homework, while 16 participants stated the living room was the location for working on homework tasks. In the bedroom or on the bed was the location suggested by 10 respondents, while four noted any available room would be where students would work. Other suggestions by respondents included the floor, reading on a parent's lap, in a quiet place, on a bus, or in the car. Five participants noted they had no idea where students completed schoolwork while at home.

When reporting the results between small and large schools, small school district employees felt students completed homework at the kitchen table or in the common living area of the home. Two small school district participants were unsure where students sought to complete homework assignments while at home. Large school district

respondents overwhelmingly believed homework completion was accomplished in a common family area, whether a living room or kitchen. Only two of the large school district respondents stated they were unsure as to where students completed their homework.

Survey Question 16. ***Does your district have a homework policy?*** This survey question was included to determine if survey participants were aware of district policies regarding homework. For this survey question, "No" was the answer for 83.72% (*n*=36) of the 43 survey participants. One respondent claimed "Yes" their school district did have a policy regarding homework. Another respondent stated their school district had an open policy when dealing with homework, and the choice to utilize homework was left to teacher discretion. Six participants were unsure if their districts had homework policies. In small school districts, all respondents stated "No" or "Unsure" regarding district homework policies. The majority of the large school district respondents stated their districts did not have a homework policy in place. A few respondents from large school districts were unsure if homework policies existed for their grade levels or their districts.

Survey Question 17. *What is your perception of homework?* After analyzing the educators' responses, three themes emerged: (a) reading practice, (b) definition of homework, and (c) impact on families.

Reading practice. Of the 47 total respondents for this survey, 46 chose to reply to this question. Reading while at home was noted by 10 (21.74%) of the individuals as a beneficial form of homework. Teacher Four stated, "First graders need to practice reading at home."

Teacher 25, also a first-grade teacher, remarked, “I do not believe homework is beneficial to first-grade success, with the exception of studying sight words, spelling words, and reading each night.”

Several educators mentioned reading at home was the only type of homework they expected their students to complete, but not all wanted or needed verification of the process, such as using reading logs. Only one small school district respondent expressed using reading for homework. Reading practice at home was a more common form of homework for large school district survey respondents.

Definition of homework. Another theme which became apparent in the review of participant responses was the varying definitions of what would constitute homework. Teacher 37 replied he or she did not like to assign much homework due to the workload at school. However, Teacher 37 went on the say, “I ask that they review spelling/word wall words each night, sometimes complete one math page, and spend 10-15 minutes reading their AR (Accelerated Reading) book.”

A kindergarten teacher respondent noted homework was “reviewing and looking for letters, numbers, and sight words in everyday materials at home.”

Teacher 25, who specified reading as being a beneficial learning skill to practice at home, also said homework was not beneficial except for word recognition, spelling, and additional reading practice. Another participant did not assign homework on a daily basis, yet explained they expected students to read 20 minutes each night, practice sight words, spelling words, and dictation sentences. Teacher 26 explained he or she was opposed to homework citing there was not enough research to back up the practice. Teacher 26 continued by saying, “The only thing that I want my students to do after

school (besides being a kid) is to read for 20 minutes."

Small school district respondents stated they either chose not to assign homework or that homework was assigned by the teacher, such as spelling words, work not completed during the day, and reviewed skills. Large school district respondents were more varied in assigning homework and expecting independent reading to be completed at home.

Impact on families. While many of the respondents believed there were benefits of homework for families, several educators were concerned about the detrimental consequences of homework on home environments and families. Teachers 5, 13, 20, and 47 agreed homework was a constructive way to have parents and students interact over what was occurring at school. Teacher 11 disagreed and felt homework took time away from family bonding and reading time. Teachers 14, 21, and 24 stated that children needed time after school to be kids and to have the opportunity to pursue other activities. Teacher 21 acknowledged, "I feel their [students] time at home should be spent together [with families] and playing with friends."

Respondents in small school districts wrote homework should be utilized to review and practice skills, for reading, to complete unfinished assignments, and to communicate with parents regarding what occurred in the classroom. One respondent did not feel homework was necessary, while another participant remarked homework should be fun. One teacher from a small school district did not feel homework should be assigned due to the overwhelming amount of work students completed in the course of a school day. The teacher went on to explain students needed time with families. Several teachers from large school districts felt family time should be experienced by their

students once they left the classroom and homework would often take away the time set aside for family bonding.

Survey Question 18. ***Have you seen a positive impact on achievement through the use of homework?*** There were 46 of the 47 respondents who replied to this survey question. Over 50% (*n*=25) of the respondents felt they had seen a positive impact on achievement through the use of homework. There was not been a positive impact on achievement was stated by 30.43% (*n*=14) of respondents. All but one of the small school district respondents replied they had seen a positive impact on their students' achievement by implementing homework. From large school districts, respondents believed they had witnessed a positive impact on student achievement for most or some of their students.

Positive impacts. The largest areas of academic advance noted by the respondents were in the areas of reading at home and the use of family involvement activities to encourage and to build self-confidence. Teacher 14 made a connection, writing, "Reading at home is a direct correlation to reading development."

Teacher 7 had noticed an improvement in reading abilities. Several teachers observed spelling, reading, and sight word practice at home had positively impacted student achievement in the classroom. Teacher 40 replied, "Students [sic] practice at home are more successful on sight word and spelling assessments."

Other teachers mentioned the use of family involvement projects for homework as a means to make positive impacts on student achievement. Teacher 47 perceived parents became aware of skills in which students were struggling through the use of family projects. Teachers 15 and 16 both discussed the involvement of families, either through

support or homework interaction through assigned projects as ways academic achievement had improved for students.

Negative impacts. While many educator respondents believed they had seen positive impacts on student academic achievement through the use of homework, 14 (30.43%) of the respondents did not believe there had been a positive impact. Five educators alleged the use of homework had provided positive impact on achievement for a few of their students, but not all. In the smaller school districts, most respondents felt homework had provided a positive impact on student achievement, especially through parental involvement. Large school district respondents who replied they had not found a positive impact on student achievement through the use of homework did not elaborate or provide any further reasonings and opinions.

Survey Question 19. ***How do you communicate with parents and students regarding homework?*** Educators, 46 out of the total 47 participants, responding to this survey question utilized a variety of communication strategies to connect with parents and students regarding homework. The communication techniques were wide and varied from methods relying on technology to more traditional methods. The use of a newsletter and Class Dojo (an online communication tool) were mentioned most often as being the preferred ways to communicate with parents and students (see Table 16). Other media platforms, such as websites, e-mail, text messaging, remind.com, Facebook, Facebook Messenger Chat Groups, and Bloomz (a parent communication application), were cited as communication tools. Several of the more traditional methods of communicating with parents and students were suggested as well. Agendas or planners, beginning of the year letters and policy notices, parent conferences, telephone calls, parent nights or open

house events, reading logs, folders or binders, and oral communication were all noted as tools educator participants utilized to communicate about homework. Several respondents mentioned providing communication on the assignments given to students. The respondents from small school districts were similar to large school district participants in their preferences for communication with parents and students. The tools noted by small school district employees included newsletters, Class Dojo, agendas, emails, telephone calls, and commenting on assignments (see Table 16).

Table 16

Teachers' Preferred Methods of Communication with Parents

Form of Parental Communication	Number of Times Mentioned by Educators
Newsletters	16
Class Dojo	15
Email	7
Agendas/Planners	5
Reading Logs	4
Parent Nights/Open House Events	3
On Student Assignments	3
Telephone	3
Daily/Weekly Reminders	3
Folders/Binders	3
Text Messages	2
Remind.com	2
Classroom Policy Notice	2
Facebook/Facebook Messenger Chat	2
Beginning of the Year Letter	1
Parent Conferences	1
Bloomz	1

Note. Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 20. ***What barriers do you experience when assigning homework? Rank the provided possible barriers in order with 1 being the greatest barrier and 8 being the least barrier.*** The participants chose from many different barriers facing students assigned homework, including (a) after-school activities, (b) assignments not returned to school, (c) lack of effort by the student, (d) lack of parental support, (e) lack of physical resources, (f) students claim the assignment is too difficult, (g) students claim the assignment is too long, and (h) students do not understand the assignment. Out of the 47 survey participants, there were 39 valid respondents. The ranking section of the survey ranged from "1" being the greatest barrier to "8" being the least barrier.

To better understand the comparisons of the data set of the ranking questions in this study, the mean was calculated for each of the ranked items in Question 20 by adding the values and then dividing by the total number of values, n=39. The mean scores were used to determine the standard deviation of each score. The standard deviation was the square root of the variance, which served as a process to calculate the distance of the mean from the value (Bluman, 2013). The larger the standard deviation, the more spread out the scores will be. The lower the standard deviation the closer together the scores will be (Bluman, 2013).

Lack of parental support was the concern selected as the greatest barrier teachers experienced when assigning homework with a mean of 2.46 and a standard deviation of 1.58 (see Table 17). A majority of respondents, 84.62% (n=33), chose lack of parent support as one of the three greatest barriers to assigning homework. Assignments not being returned to school followed with a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 1.40.

More than half, 58.97% (*n*=23), of the survey respondents chose assignments not being returned as one of the top three barriers experienced when assigning homework. The third greatest barrier to assigning homework, as determined by the respondents' survey rankings, was after-school activities with a mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 2.28. The cumulative response percentage of participants ranking assignments as one of the three greatest barriers to assigning homework was 46.15% (*n*=18).

The lowest ranked barrier teachers experienced when assigning homework was "assignments were too long" with a mean of 6.41 and a standard deviation of 1.50. Assignments being too long was chosen as one of the bottom three barriers experienced by teachers when assigning homework by 79.49% (*n*=31) of the survey ranking question respondents (see Table 17).

Table 17

Teachers' Ranking Responses to Barriers Experienced When Assigning Homework

Barriers	*M*	*SD*
Lack of Parental Support	2.46	1.58
Assignments Not Returned	3.30	1.39
After-school Activities	3.74	2.27
Lack of Effort	3.79	2.15
Lack of Physical Resources	4.69	1.80
Assignment Too Difficult	5.66	1.47
Did Not Understand the Assignment	5.89	2.33
Assignment Too Long	6.41	1.49

Note. Level of responses based on a rank in order scale (1=greatest barrier, 8=least barrier). Data collected from survey results.

Survey Question 21. ***Third-grade teachers only: Do you believe homework impacts student achievement on the third-grade MAP? Why or why not?***

Only third-grade teachers responding were asked to answer this question due to their experiences with students participating in the third-grade MAP assessments in both English Language Arts and Mathematics at the completion of third-grade. Third-grade teachers represented 25.53% (*n*=12) of the total survey respondents. There were 83.33% (*n*=10) of the third-grade teacher respondents who replied, "No, they do not believe homework impacted student achievement on the third-grade MAP." One participant

stated, “Homework may be a nice review of previously taught skills and concepts, but it will not get a student to mastery of the skills.”

Another respondent felt the use of small group instruction in the classroom provided a more significant impact to increased MAP scores for their class. Other respondents were concerned the rigor for homework would not be what was necessary to show adequate growth and felt they could provide the necessary information and practice in the classroom setting. Of the 16.67% (*n*=2) of respondents who replied, “Yes, they believed homework impacted student achievement on the third-grade MAP,” the importance of consistent practice of basic skills was noted. One respondent stressed practicing multiplication facts at home helped to set a foundation for students’ future mathematical success. Another educator explained that homework was expected, and no excuses were given or accepted. The factor of smaller class sizes was offered by one respondent as a better indicator of academic success on the MAP rather than the use of homework.

Summary

In Chapter Four, the researcher presented the survey data collected for this research study. The data gathered from the survey aligned with the three research questions of this study. The purpose of this study was to determine kindergarten through third-grade teachers’ perceptions of homework. Possible barriers to teachers assigning homework were ranked by the survey participants, and it was determined a lack of parental support was ranked as the greatest barrier experienced by teachers when assigning homework. Small and large school district survey participants were compared as to how their perceptions related to the need, frequency, and amount of homework

needed, as well as other aspects of homework. In Chapter Five, the researcher will address a summary and discussion of the findings. Implications for practice will be addressed. Suggestions for future research will be offered, and a final summary will be presented.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Educators and students have consistently viewed homework as the assigning of daily or weekly tasks by classroom teachers to be completed at home for independent practice of schoolwork (Salazar, 2016). Watkins and Stevens (2013) noted homework stemmed from a societal need for academic excellence impacting educational decisions from parents, students, teachers, and administrators. However, the assigning of homework by educators has continued to be met with mixed reviews (Biscoglio & Langer, 2011; Buell, 2004; Vatterott, 2009). In the case of students not completing tasks designed and assigned by teachers, the incomplete homework assignments may have kept some students from "success as independent learners" (Vatterott, 2009, p. 95). Biscoglio and Langer (2011) shared their concerns associated with excessive homework and the negative impact on families, society, and education caused by "disproportionately lengthy and pointless homework" (p. 155). For many educators, the "balance between what they want to do and what they can do" has become a point of contention between whether or not to assign homework (Salazar, 2016, p. 5). Haskins et al. (2012) and the International Reading Association (2014) agreed that quality teachers have had the greatest impact on student academic success; moreover, teachers have also proved capable of making professional judgments on what worked best to encourage both student engagement and scholastic success (Haskins et al., 2012; International Reading Association, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to explore kindergarten through third-grade teachers' perceptions of homework. The researcher e-mailed 190 kindergarten through third-grade teachers in seven school districts within five counties in Central Missouri. A total of 47 respondents completed the on-line survey, which consisted of 13 Likert-scale

questions and seven open-ended response questions designed to address the research questions of this study. The Likert-scale questions were sources of quantitative data, and the open-ended questions provided qualitative data for this mixed-methods study. An additional open-ended question was available only for third-grade teachers who had the experience of preparing students for the annual Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) assessment at the completion of the third-grade year.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this mixed methods study:

1. What are the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding homework?

2. What barriers, (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework, or (d) the nature of the assignments, inhibit student completion of homework the most?

3. In what ways does the size of the school district impact the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third-grade regarding homework?

This chapter includes a summary of the findings, conclusions, educational implications, and suggestions for future research collected from this study.

Findings

The following is a discussion of the findings of this study as they related to the research literature, which helped to explain or to predict the phenomena of homework. The findings could be useful to current or future classroom teachers when deciding whether to assign homework for their students. The argument for assigning homework was not limited to the debate amongst stakeholders regarding its usefulness but should

also include the concerns of quantity and quality of the assigned homework tasks. Each of the 20 survey questions addressed the research questions designed for this study.

Demographic data. The survey respondents were a combination of small and large school district teachers. The educators had differing years of experience, as well as educational degrees, varying from bachelor degrees to a doctorate degree. There were 14 educators who stated they did not believe homework was necessary or beneficial for their students. Of those 14, 85.71% (*n*=12) were large school district teachers, and only two were from small school districts. The class sizes for the 14 teachers who did not believe homework was useful ranged from one teacher with under 15 students to eight teachers serving 21 to 25 students. One educator replied she felt homework was not beneficial to student growth, but she did believe smaller class sizes would be a better indicator of academic success. The years of experience for the 14 teachers who had not found homework to be useful varied from one first-year teacher to most respondents having taught 11 to 15 years. There were six educators of the 14 who had earned a master's degree and four who held bachelor's degrees. All 14 respondents who did not believe homework to be helpful were female. One respondent chose not to reply as to his or her opinion of homework, either for or against the practice.

The remaining 33 respondents felt homework, to some degree, would be beneficial. A substantial number of the 33 respondents, 75.76% (*n*=25), who felt homework would be beneficial, at least in certain situations, possessed a master's or specialist degree. The grade level taught by the homework proponents of this survey did not appear to be a deciding factor as all grade-level categories were equally represented. A teacher's work experience also did not seem to affect the decisions of the pro-

homework educators as 10 educators had taught between six to 10 years, 10 teachers had taught between 11 to 20 years, and 10 educators had taught over 21 years with all deeming homework important. An interesting finding in the demographic data showed three educators, who had taught for over 21 years, did not find homework useful, yet 10 educators with over 21 years of experience in the classroom stated they believed in the usefulness of homework. The number of educators who believed homework was a useful tool was twice as many as the educators who did not find homework beneficial with five small school district respondents and 28 large school district respondents commenting.

Research Question One. *What are the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third grade regarding homework?*

According to research conducted by Salazar (2016), teachers' perceptions of homework were motivated by their own experiences with homework as elementary students. In interviews conducted by Salazar (2016), none of the participants detested homework, and all trusted in the benefits associated with homework. Salazar (2016) surmised this could be a probable reason the individuals had chosen to become teachers. Timmermans, DeBoer, and van der Werf (2015) discovered the teachers' perceptions of students often were based on the expectations teachers had of high and low-achieving students. They wrote, "We found that teachers' perceptions of the students work habits are more important for high-performing students, while the perceived student-teacher relationship appears to be more important for low-performing students" (Timmermans et al., 2015, p. 234). Teachers' perceptions, positive and negative, were often influenced by the self-confidence, behaviors, and student-teacher relationships of students (Timmermans et al., 2015). The additional workload of designing, implementing, and

providing feedback for effective homework tasks also may have affected teachers' perceptions of homework (Hampshire et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding the use of homework in their classrooms. The respondents replied to survey questions designed to determine the teachers' perceptions of homework, from whether students completed assignments to the turning in of assignments, as well as from the amount of time teachers believed students spent on homework tasks to whether they believed parents monitored or assisted with tasks completed at home. While the closed-ended questions provided answer choices for teachers to select from, the open-ended questions allowed educators the opportunity to provide further comment and explanation about their homework beliefs. From the information obtained from this survey, it does not appear the school districts had placed stringent demands upon teachers regarding homework as 75.56% (*n*=34) of respondents had "Never" felt obligated by their administrators or district to assign homework. When it came to teachers aligning homework with grade level standards, 77.78% (*n*=35) of participants stated they "Often" or "Always" correlated homework with grade level standards.

Of the 45 participants who responded to the question of how often they assigned homework, 73.33% (*n*=33) assigned homework "Once or twice a week" and up to "More than three times a week," while 26.67% (*n*=12) of participants "Never"assigned homework at all. This number indicated a contradiction in the teacher perceptions of the benefits or usefulness of homework, considering 69.56% (*n*=32) of the survey respondents believed homework was beneficial to students' academic success, and

30.34% (*n*=14) of the respondents did not find homework to be a useful tool; yet the numbers showed more educators had assigned homework. Also, it was interesting to note the number of educators, 86.96% (*n*=40), who stated they "Never" or only "Sometimes" liked to assign homework; however, again 69.56% (*n*=32) of survey respondents noted they believed homework to be useful and beneficial. Several teachers answered they did not like to give homework because they felt it was not needed and kids needed time to be kids, as well as to spend time with families. Another teacher respondent believed there had not been significant research to prove homework had served as a contributing factor for student success.

Many teachers described homework for their classes as optional, while others considered homework an approach to provide parents with an opportunity to become active in their children's education. This inclusion of parents may be a method to improve communication between home and school (Constantino, 2016). According to several other educator respondents, when students had not used time wisely in class, assignments often were sent home for completion. Eight of the teacher respondents indicated they did not support assigning homework; however, they did expect their students to read, either recreationally or from leveled readers, each evening. Results also showed 70.21% (*n*=32) of survey respondents who expressed homework was beneficial agreed the tasks should be relevant and not time-consuming. A review of skills learned, studying for assessments, and an opportunity to include parents were all mentioned by respondents as reasons why homework could be beneficial or helpful to students.

Survey Question 18 asked participants if they had noticed a positive impact on student achievement using homework. Stating "Yes," 63.83% (*n*=30) of the participants

noted a positive impact, especially in relation to learning spelling words and improving reading comprehension. The increase of parental interaction for some students was a positive impact of homework. One respondent noted inconsistencies related to the impact of homework. This participant replied at times he or she had noticed homework had aided in building confidence in students, as well as allowing students to recognize homework did not have to be difficult, but, at other times, he or she had not observed these things. One respondent replied at times he or she had noticed a positive impact on student achievement with homework, but, at other times, he or she had not. The educator also stated when he or she had chosen to send homework, it had been streamlined, deemed important, and was not considered busy work.

Survey Question Six asked participants if they expected parents to assist with homework assignments, while Question 10 participants if they expected parents or guardians to check students' homework. Nearly half of the respondents selected "Sometimes," yet a kindergarten teacher participant noted when she had assigned homework geared for family involvement in the past, the teacher discovered students had attempted to complete the tasks on their own without any guidance. The teacher felt this was not beneficial for anyone. More than half of the small school district and large school district teacher respondents, 57.89% (n=22) and 57.14% (n=4), respectively, noted they "Often" or "Always" expected parents or guardians to check their children's homework. These findings indicated the size of the school district was not a concern when expecting parents to check homework.

Research Question Two. *What barriers, (a) students' home environments, (b) resources available to students, (c) volume of homework, or (d) the nature of the*

assignment, inhibit student completion of homework the most?

On Survey Question 20, survey respondents were asked to rank the possible barriers experienced by students when teachers assigned homework. The possible barriers included: (a) after-school activities, (b) assignments not returned, (c) lack of effort, (d) lack of parental support, (e) lack of physical resources, (f) students claimed assignments are too difficult, (g) students claimed assignments are too long, and/or (h) students did not understand the assignment. The mean scores for the barriers to teachers assigning homework were based on a ranking scale of eight barriers. Of the 47 survey respondents, 80.85% (n=38) chose to participate in the ranking questions. The mean scores were relatively low ranging from 1.40 to 2.34, which indicated a small sample size, as well as a low number of options available to the respondents. The standard deviation was used to show the diversity of the data set, or in this case, the ranking question options. When the standard deviation has been found to be small, it showed the data collected was close to the collected mean, which in this case, involved the ranking question options; on the other hand, if the standard deviation was large, the data points were farther from the collected mean (DataStar, 2013). The smaller the standard deviation, the closer it was to the mean (DataStar, 2013).

With regard to these barriers, teachers stated that the barrier causing the greatest hurdles for students was the lack of parental support. Participants ranked the lack of parental support as the greatest barrier teachers experienced when assigning homework by a mean of 2.46 and a standard deviation of 1.59. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) feared the lofty expectations of teachers regarding parental involvement with homework had often resulted in assigned tasks too difficult for students to complete independently,

which resulted in parental homework rather than parental support of homework. Clarifying the role of the parent to be more of a monitor in the homework process would be beneficial to all involved (Hampshire et al., 2014). Pressman et al. (2015) noted, students' parents with superior beliefs in their abilities to achieve goals were also parents who were more involved with their children's' homework.

The results of the collected data from the closed-ended survey questions pointed to the teachers' perceptions in which parents were actively involved in their children's homework pursuits; yet, the teachers surveyed considered lack of parental support a barrier to their assigning of homework. This discrepancy suggested the teachers' perceptions of parental support of homework tasks may have been distorted or perhaps the level of parental support may have been influenced by the type of homework assigned by educators. Samm and Jeong (2013) found that not all families viewed homework as a positive extension of school learning. The burden of homework often had become one of the foremost criticisms between home and school (Samm & Jeong, 2013). Pressman et al. (2015) identified the parents' educational levels, confidence levels, and cultural backgrounds as areas that stimulated the families' levels of stress in conjunction with assigned homework. Of the survey participants, 40.00% (*n*=18) specified they "Often" or "Always" expected students to receive assistance with homework. In smaller school districts, the percentage of respondents expecting students to receive help "Often" or "Always" was 42.86% (*n*=3) in contrast to the 39.47% (*n*=15) of large school district participants. The expectation of parents checking students' homework was considered "Sometimes" by 26.32% (*n*=10) of large school district respondents compared to 28.57% (n=2) of small school district participants.

When asked to respond as to where teacher participants believed students completed their homework, five respondents noted they had "no clue" where students completed homework. The family's living room, kitchen, or student's bedroom were locations suggested by 82.98% (*n*=39) of the 47 respondents as to where they believed students completed homework. This perception led to the supposition many teachers surveyed believed students completed their homework in open areas where parents were assumed to be located. Xu (2013) stressed the importance of arranging the environment to maximize student success in completing homework. While a specific room or location within the home was not suggested, a workspace free of distractions and clutter was considered beneficial to student homework success (Xu, 2013).

Survey participants ranked resources available to students as fifth on the ranking scale of "1" being the greatest barrier and "8" being the least barrier when assigning homework. The lack of physical resources was identified with a mean of 4.69 and a standard deviation of 1.81. Respondents identified basic school supplies, such as pencils, paper, workbooks, and books to read, as essential resources needed by students to complete homework tasks. Several respondents acknowledged students needed supportive parents or a parent to read to in order to have successfully completed homework assignments. Conversely, participants deemed the lack of parental support as the greatest barrier to teachers assigning homework. Two participants indicated the need for a technology device for homework completion as a barrier. One educator revealed he or she had provided all the resources needed for students to complete work at home.

The volume of work to be completed was ranked eighth on the ranking scale of "1" being the greatest barrier and "8" being the least barrier experienced by teachers

when assigning homework. With a mean of 6.41 and a standard deviation of 1.50, the educators participating in this survey did not believe students thought homework assignments were too long. When estimating the amount of time they expected students to spend on homework, 43.47% (*n*=20) of survey respondents believed "Up to 10 minutes" would be adequate time. In small school districts, 57.14% (*n*=4) considered "Up to 10 minutes" was a sufficient amount of time for homework completion by their students compared to large school districts where the percentage of responses was 41.03% (*n*=16) for "Up to 10 minutes" spent on homework. The volume of work did not appear to be a major factor in the homework debate according to the data collected from the respondents of this research study.

The nature of the assignment also was not a great concern by the participants, as educators selected the survey option "Students believed assignments were too difficult" as sixth and "Students did not understand the assignment" as seventh on the ranking scale. The option of "Students believed the assignment was too difficult" had a mean of 5.67 and a standard deviation of 1.47. The choice of "Students did not understand the assignment" had a mean of 5.90 and a standard deviation of 2.34. The assignments most used by teachers responding to this survey included reading each evening and the review of basic concepts and skills. Students who did not make use of the in-class work time may have had homework as well. Carr (2013) noted effective homework had a well-defined purpose, allowed students to work independently, and was not assigned as tedious tasks merely to waste time.

Research Question Three. *In what ways does the size of the school district impact the perceptions of teachers in kindergarten through third grade regarding*

homework?

In this survey, 85.11% (*n*=40) of the survey respondents taught in large school districts, while the remaining 14.89% (*n*=7) of participants were employed with small school districts. Within the small school districts represented in this survey, 100% (*n*=7) of the respondents had "Never" felt obligated to assign homework, while 94.74% (*n*=36) of participants in large districts had "Never" or only "Sometimes" had felt obligated to assign homework. This data showed administrators from both the small and large school districts represented in this survey did not appear to place demands upon their teachers regarding the use of homework. This was consistent with the findings of Lopez-Mendez and Gonzalez-Rubio (2018) as "there are no clear criteria regarding how, when, where, and how much should be assigned" (p. 001).

The expectations as to the level of parental support on homework tasks varied between small and large school districts. The results of this survey showed 42.86% (*n*=3) of the small school district respondents "Always" expected students to receive assistance with homework. Yet only 15.79% (*n*=6) of large school district participants believed the same. This difference could have been due to the unique roles small, or rural, school districts often have had within the community, particularly the partnering of the school employees and the community members for the success of the children (Castro, 2016).

Vatterott (2014) explained that homework was a method of gathering feedback on student learning. Based on the responses given, the teacher perceptions concerning homework differed upon the size of the school district. When monitoring homework completion, 71.43% (*n*=5) of small school district participants "Always" or "Often" monitored completion of tasks, while 56.76% (*n*=21) of large school district respondents

"Always" or "Often" monitored homework completion. Providing feedback on student homework was another area in which there was a significant difference between small and large school districts. In a study conducted by Valdez et al. (2009), teacher feedback on homework was invaluable as it aided students in perceiving the significance of the assignment, as well as increased the students' levels of interest. Small school district respondents, at 71.43% (n=5), reported "Always" providing feedback to students on homework. Only 23.68% (*n*=9) of large school district respondents said they "Always" provided feedback to students on homework. A plausible reason for this discrepancy could be the type of teacher feedback. While feedback on homework assignments may have ranged from a simple checkmark to words of encouragement or constructive criticism, Watkins and Stevens (2013) found honest feedback from teachers aided in improving the quality of student work on tasks completed at home. Fox (2016) noted that parents appreciated teachers who provided feedback on homework and considered these teachers to be more organized than teachers who had not provided feedback. For many parents and students, the lack of teacher feedback provided on assignments completed outside of school indicated the assignment was unimportant and a misuse of students' time (Fox, 2016).

When providing written responses to their perceptions of homework, the small school district respondents were decidedly split. Half of the respondents did not find homework as necessary or beneficial. The other half felt assigning homework was worthwhile. In large school districts, there were more respondents who felt homework was beneficial. One of the respondents from a small school district, who stated homework was not beneficial, felt homework was too overwhelming and students needed

family time at home. An opposite remark came from a third-grade teacher, also from a small school district, who wrote she believed in the adage "Practice makes perfect.". A third-grade teacher from a large school district responded she did not like homework and did not feel there was any positive impact resulting from assigned homework.

Both small and large school district respondents agreed on some key points. For example, both groups responded favorably to the fact that homework could be a method to involve the parents, should be used as a review of concepts and skills and should be fun, not burdensome. One comment shared by a small school district participant supported the idea of homework allowing parents to become active in helping with their children's education. Another participant noted parents became more aware of what skills and concepts needed additional work when helping their children complete homework assignments. Involving parents in the homework process was the goal of the science activity packs designed by a school in a study by Reinhart et al. (2016). Understanding the amount of time students spent with families and utilizing the high-interest area of science were combined into interactive science pack activities to encourage learning outside the school with active parental involvement (Reinhart, 2016). Most of the small school district respondents replied they had seen a positive impact on student academic achievement using homework in their classrooms. In contrast, many of the large school district participants noted there had been positive impacts related to academic achievement for some students, but not with all. Many of the small and large school district respondents who chose "No, they had not seen a positive impact on achievement through the use of homework" did not comment further than a no response.

Conclusions

The results of this research study depicted kindergarten through third-grade teachers' perceptions of homework. The participants of this study represented seven school districts in five counties in Central Missouri. The survey results showed teachers' perceptions of homework varied even though the basic demographics of participants were similar. The survey respondents evenly represented teachers in grades kindergarten through third grade. Of the educator participants who believed in the importance of homework, 75.76% (*n*=25) held a master's degree or higher. For the participants who did not believe in the benefits of homework, 71.43% (*n*=10) held a master's degree or higher. The years of teacher experience showed comparable results. Of the survey respondents who did not like to use homework, 64.29% (*n*=9) had taught for more than 10 years. Similarly, of the teacher participants who valued homework, 60.61% (*n*=20) had taught for more than 10 years. While many educators stated they did not assign homework and were willing to explain their reasons, just as many teachers noted they assigned homework and were just as diligent in providing their reasoning as well.

The lack of parental support noted in this study as being the greatest barrier teachers experienced when assigning homework was not a new phenomenon. It was a belief held by both small and large school district respondents. With changes in family structures and parental responsibilities, students may have experienced an impact when seeking academic success while completing work at home. A study by Salazar (2016) noted teacher perceptions of homework often were based on their own histories of completing homework as students as well as relationships with students' parents. Salazar (2016) discovered through her work the struggles teachers experienced to create

partnerships with parents with the goal of assisting students to achieve academically. Furthermore, Salazar (2016) noted the lack of parental support often affected teachers' decisions when assigning homework (Salazar, 2016).

When examining the human resource theoretical framework of this study, as discussed by Bolman and Deal (2013), motivation and interpersonal relationships may have played a key role in the homework debate. In a study by Timmermans et al. (2015), they discovered the future academic success of students often was related to the teachers' perceptions of the students' attributes. For example, if educators perceived students as self-confident and possessed positive work habits, the teachers tended to have higher expectations for the students (Timmermans et al., 2015). Skinner's (1953) Incentive Theory of Motivation focused on positive reinforcement rather than penalties (Bernstein et al., 2012). While several survey respondents of this research study did mention using a reward system for students who completed and returned homework tasks, not one educator surveyed mentioned in the open-ended questions any negative consequences for not returning homework.

Students who have not had their basic needs met, as suggested by Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), may not have had the ability to develop beyond a basic stage, which may have affected students' abilities or desires to achieve, whether through homework or other academic endeavors (Burleson & Thoron, 2014). In addition to Maslow's Hierarchy, one must consider Piaget's (1936) Theory of Cognitive Development as well, which recognized for children's cognitive development to progress basic needs must be met (Bernstein et al., 2012). The changes in family structures, as well as varying socioeconomic factors, also may have impacted the basic needs of some

students (Crosnoe & Benner, 2012; Haskins, 2015).

Survey respondents of this study indicated more of the traditional uses of homework such as worksheets, reading, and reviews of previously taught concepts and skills. This assertion was compatible with Gardeners' Multiple Intelligences (1983), which suggested verbal-linguistics, logical-mathematical, and visual-spatial intelligences have most often been chosen for assignments by teachers (Bernstein et al., 2012). Salazar (2016) discovered teachers would have liked to assign more interactive projects but tended to rely on paper and pencil worksheets instead and noted "It is what they most frequently assign that determines what they are actually doing in the classroom" (p. 18). A few educators did choose to assign family involvement tasks as homework according to the results of this research study.

The discrepancy for the working definition of homework became apparent when analyzing the results of this study. Numerous researchers have agreed homework could be defined as work given to students to complete at home (Salazar, 2016; Valdez, 2009; Watkins & Stevens, 2013). In this study, many of the participants stated they did not assign homework, yet they expected students to read at home. Some participants specified a set amount of time such as 20 minutes of at-home reading, while others used reading logs to monitor time spent reading at home. One respondent required students to read at home and relied on the honor system rather than parental input or reading logs. Several of the survey participants commented they did not assign homework. However, they wanted their students to practice sight words and spelling words each evening. With the comments from this survey, it has become clear there is an inconsistency among educators as to what has been considered homework.

This inconsistency among perceived experts in the classroom may cause communication issues with parents and become a source of contention within families when assigning work to be completed at home. White and Levers (2016) discovered in a parent and teacher engagement study both parents and teachers considered communication between parents and teachers, as well as between teachers and administrators, as essential for the success of students. Some of the concerns mentioned by parents in the White and Levers (2016) study included concerns over a lack of preparedness for students and the inability of parents to assist their children with homework. White and Levers (2016) suggested these concerns may have been alleviated if open communication regarding expectations had been established. The findings of this study show teachers communicated with parents through a variety of methods regarding classroom activities and procedures, yet the expectations of homework may not be openly discussed, but rather, assumed by both teachers and parents.

Educational Implications

Teachers often have used homework to help meet the rigorous standards they are unable to fit into regular school days (Pressman et al., 2015). Other educators have chosen not to assign homework because they did not wish to spend time with follow up (Watkins & Stevens, 2013). For homework to be beneficial, it must meet the needs of all involved. Some parents may not feel they are able to help their children with homework (Fox, 2016). In research led by Watkins and Stevens (2012), the principal of the school being studied guessed many students did not receive any assistance with homework due to the long or late work hours of the parents, as well as the parents' inability, either perceived or real, to assist with the content of the homework. Three main implications

for teachers, students, and parents surfaced as a result of this study. First, teachers needed to design and to assign tasks that met the state grade level standards, as well as complemented what was occurring in the classroom. Second, students needed to understand the purpose of the assignment. Finally, parents needed to trust the teachers who had the best interest of the students in mind.

Teachers needed to design and to assign tasks that meet the state grade-level standards, as well as complemented what was occurring in the classroom. The inconsistency in the definition of homework among the teacher respondents may have indicated a possible lack of teacher training. Teacher education programs should address this within content areas to help future educators to understand the importance of lesson design and creativity of student tasks. Current and veteran teachers should be provided with both professional development in core subject areas as well as time in which to design lessons and activities for within and outside the classroom to best support student academic achievement and grade-level standards. Allowing teachers time to plan worthwhile homework activities that challenged, yet encouraged students, could be an investment in the future of both the child and the school system and may apply some consistency to the child's educational experience.

Students needed to understand the purpose of the assignment. Many educators who have worked to develop working relationships with students and had communicated their expectations in ways students found logical may have helped students to better appreciate why an assignment had been designed for home completion (Nesloney & Welcome, 2016; Timmermans et al., 2015). The researcher believed when students comprehended the rationale behind assignments, they were more willing to

attempt completion of the assignments, whether it was in the classroom or at home. Allowing students to think outside the box to complete assignments and encouraging the utilization of a variety of learning styles or intelligences may also allow some students to consider extending learning outside the school walls as something to be enjoyed rather than bemoaned. Teacher feedback may assist students in understanding the meaningfulness of assigned homework (Fox, 2016; Valdez et al., 2009). In this study the researcher found 48.89% (*n*=22) of respondents reported students "Often" turn in assignments; yet only 24.44% (n=11) of the same respondents replied they "Often" provide feedback for students' homework tasks. In addition to well-designed homework tasks and teacher feedback, positive relationships developed between students and teachers may offer additional understanding regarding expectations of both students and teachers (Hampshire et al., 2014; Timmermans et al., 2015).

Parents needed to trust teachers who had the best interests of the students in mind. It seems logical to assume most parents, regardless of their financial or work situations, want what is best for their child. Additionally, most teachers, regardless of their years of teaching experience or the age of the children they teach, want what is best for their students. If both parties would be willing to take the steps necessary to openly and continuously monitor communication between home and school, many problems and issues with homework may be alleviated (White & Levers, 2016; Xu, 2013). Teachers and parents may need to set aside the preconceived notions they have of each other to achieve open communication. Open communication may be just the beginning of building the trust needed between school and home. When teachers show themselves to be constantly seeking ways to better meet the needs of their students, they, in turn, may

be showing parents they value the work they do to help children achieve academic success. When parents encourage their children to participate in assignments, at home, and at school, they may be intentionally or unintentionally indicating their appreciation for education and modeling the importance of learning for their children. The trust between teacher and parent often does not prove easy, yet is necessary for the continued success of the child.

Recommendations for Future Research

A variety of future research opportunities stemmed from this study on teachers' perceptions of homework. One possible route for further study would be to investigate the comparisons between parent and student perceptions of homework. Understanding how parents and students viewed homework expectations could help educators when developing and analyzing homework assignments. Another direction for future study would be to explore the impact socioeconomic statuses of students has on homework completion. Investigating the impact of socioeconomic status on student academic achievement would provide teachers with an advantage of offering homework assignments which best met the needs of the individual student as well as a potential understanding of the roadblocks inhibiting their success. A final suggestion for future research would be the examination of a connection between homework and student academic achievement by examining test scores and the possible relationships between teachers who do and do not assign homework. Perhaps the greatest indication of the success or failure of homework on academic achievement would be the assessment of the impact of homework on test scores.

Parent and student perceptions. A study, which includes the perceptions of

parents and students, along with teacher perceptions of homework, may provide a more compelling analysis of the use of homework and the impact it may or may not have on student achievement. Allowing parents and students to specify their opinions on homework would allow educators and administrators to better decide upon the type, frequency, and motives behind homework as well as the development of a consistent district policy. Educators could use the students' feedback as a means of knowing what homework students enjoyed and what they considered to be busywork. Permitting parents to voice concerns regarding homework may assist teachers in acknowledging the busy schedules today's families keep or the willingness of parents to be further involved in their children's educations. Along with the perceptions of parents and students would be the parents' definitions of homework compared to an educators' definitions of homework. Biscoglio and Langer (2011) identified a widening of the gap between what is taught in schools and parental knowledge. Keeping an open-door policy on communication regarding homework use and expectations of all parties involved might possibly encourage parental support, while also encouraging learning outside the classroom walls. Other ideas of possible research methodologies would be to include surveys, focus groups, and/or personal interviews with teachers or parents to collect and to analyze their perceptions of homework.

Socioeconomic statuses of students. An interesting topic for a further study would be to investigate the relationship (if any) between the socioeconomic statuses of students and their homework assignments. Researching the possibility of how students' socioeconomic statuses impacted their academic achievement would help educators and school districts' overall performances in making academic decisions and providing

academic interventions for some students. While it would provide an enlightening and thought-provoking route for study, it would need to be completed in a cautious manner, being conscientious and respectful of family and living situations and confidentiality laws. Although the education system tends to assume students living in lower socioeconomic situations are the ones who are suffering the most academically, a study into the reality of the diverse socioeconomic ranges would provide a clearer illustration of the needs of children in all financial factions. Understanding students' socioeconomic statuses may help educators better define homework and homework expectations based upon individuals' needs.

Homework and students' academic achievement connection. A difficult yet interesting study concept would be to see if there is a connection between students completing homework and the level of achievement of the students in core subject areas. The level of achievement could be as simple as weekly spelling tests or as complex as statewide assessment scores. The challenges with this type of study would be isolating homework as the primary reason for increased student achievement rather than other variables, such as quality teachers, curriculum, and class sizes. The differences in state achievement tests would need to be taken into consideration. While a study of this magnitude may be demanding, the results could conceivably contribute in halting the homework debate and improving academic success for a wide array of students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of kindergarten through third-grade teachers regarding homework. The researcher utilized a mixed-method approach to gather data concerning the use of homework in current kindergarten through

third-grade teachers' classrooms. Likert-scale statements allowed the researcher to gather data about various homework concerns, ranging from the frequency of assigned homework to the use of teacher feedback on homework. Survey participants were able to comment on the open-ended questions, which were designed to gather perceptions and opinions of educators and their uses of homework, if any. In the surveys, the researcher asked educators to rank possible barriers experienced when assigning homework with "1" being the greatest barrier and "8" being the least barrier. Also, the researcher asked third-grade teachers only to respond to the final open-ended question due to their proficiency in preparing students to take the MAP in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the completion of third-grade.

The results of this study showed one of the top three greatest barriers experienced by teachers in large and small school districts, according to their self-reported perceptions, when assigning homework was a lack of parental support. When assigning homework, 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district teachers expected students to "Always" receive help with homework, while 44.74% (*n*=17) of large school district educators only expected students to receive help with homework "Sometimes." In small school districts, 57.14% (*n*=4) of educators "Always" expected parents and guardians to check students' homework assignments, and 34.21% (*n*=13) of large school district teachers felt the same. According to the research findings, there appeared to be a disconnect between teachers' expectations and what the parents' perceptions of what they contributed to their children's homework. Vatterott (2009) acknowledged teachers often have used homework to practice skills due to the nature of some concepts demanding frequent repetition; yet, teachers often have not adapted homework for students' various learning

styles or multiple intelligences.

Teachers should address both quantity and quality of homework assignments, and this information should be shared with parents (Weir, 2016). Weir (2016) noted, the quality of homework was important and "even when homework is helpful, there can be too much of a good thing" (p. 36). Through this survey, the researcher discovered 42.86% (*n*=3) of small school district respondents and 39.47% (*n*=15) of large school district participants assigned homework "Once or twice a week." Most of the respondents expected homework completion to take "Up to 10 minutes" according to 57.14% (*n*=4) of small school district teachers and 41.03% (*n*=16) of large school district teachers. The educators responded, 71.43% (*n*=5) from small school districts and 71.05% (*n*=27) from large school districts, the homework they have assigned "Always correlated with the grade level standards," which should allude to the quality of the assignments.

There are many school educators and administrators concerned about homework issues such as quantity and quality of work assigned outside of school, and as a result, they are taking steps to address questions focused on homework. One such school, Kirkwood High School in Kirkwood, Missouri has piloted a policy of no-homework weekends to alleviate student and teacher stress (Taketa, 2018). Kirkwood High School Principal Michael Havener suggested the weekends free from homework may aid in improving the mental health of students and teachers by lessening the workload of students and time spent grading and planning by teachers (Taketa, 2018). With an increase in counselor visits along with outside school professional counseling on the rise among students, the administrators of Kirkwood High School are searching for workable solutions (Mowers, 2018). Havener stated he did believe homework was important, "but

I want to make sure that we're giving homework that is directly correlated to the objectives that we're trying to teach in our classroom" (as cited in Taketa, 2018, para. 15). Other St. Louis, Missouri, area schools, such as the Lindbergh High School and Mary Institute and St. Louis County Day School, where educators are trying similar approaches to the no-homework weekends (Mowers, 2018).

A concern to the researcher raised from this study was the lack of agreement among the participants as to the definition of homework. Several teachers responded they did not assign homework, yet they expected students to read for 20 minutes each night, as well as practice spelling words and sight words. For many parents, this may be considered homework. A lack of communication regarding the expectations of each educational stakeholder may attribute to a lack of desire to encourage educational achievement inside and outside the classroom walls. Castro (2016) noted, "When each can enhance the work of the others, all can thrive", when referring to the relationships between families, communities, and schools (p. 140). Open communication between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and students and parents could be fundamental to inspiring lifelong educational partnerships and addressing the homework debate.

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Appendix A
Teacher Survey
Kindergarten through Third Grade

Demographic Information:

1. Grade level you teach:
(a) kindergarten
(b) first grade
(c) second grade
(d) third grade

2. Number of students in your class:
(a) 15 or under
(b) 16-20
(c) 21-25
(d) 26 or over

3. Educational attainment:
(a) Bachelor Degree
(b) Master's Degree
(c) Specialist Degree
(d) Doctorate

4. Years of Experience:
(a) First year Teacher
(b) 2-5 years
(c) 6-10 years
(d) 11—15 years
(e) 16-20 years
(f) 21+ years

5. Gender
(a) Female
(b) Male
(c) Prefer not to say

6. What district do you teach in?
_____

Directions: Answer each question honestly. Circle only one response for each question.

Questions	1	2	3	4
1. How often do you assign homework?	Not at All	Once or Twice a week	Three times a week	More than three times a week
2. How much time do you expect your students to work on homework?	None	Up to 10 minutes	11-19 minutes	20 minutes or more
3. On average, how often do your students **turn in their homework**?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
4. How often do your students **complete their homework**?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
5. How often do you find students sharing homework assignments?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
6. Do you expect students to receive help with their homework?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
7. Do you feel obligated to assign homework?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
8. Does your homework correlate with your grade level standards?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
9. How often do you monitor homework completion?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always

10. Do you expect parents/guardians to check students' homework?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
11. Do you give feedback to students on their homework?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. Do you like assigning homework?	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
13. How many of your students are retained on a yearly basis?	0	1-2	3-4	5 or more

14. What situations or resources will your students need at home to complete their homework assignments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Where do you think your students complete their homework while at home?

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Does your school district have a homework policy?

_____

_____

_____

17. What is your perception of homework?

_____

_____

_____

18. Have you seen a positive impact on achievement through the use of homework?

_____

_____

_____

19. How do you communicate with parents and students regarding homework?

_____

_____

_____

20. What barriers do you experience when assigning homework? Rank in order with 1 being the greatest barrier and 8 being the least barrier.

_____ After-school activities

_____ Assignments are not returned to school

_____ Lack of effort by student

_____ Lack of parental support

_____ Lack of physical resources (i.e. pencils, books, technology)

_____ Students claim the assignment is too difficult

_____ Students claim the assignment is too long

_____ Students do not understand the assignment

Third Grade Teachers only:

21. Do you believe homework impacts student achievement on the Third Grade MAP? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Permission to Use Survey

From: Tonya Heavin

Sent: Monday, June 26, 2017 5:12 PM

To: Enrique Murillo, Jr

Subject: Doctoral Student

Hello,

My name is Tonya Heavin. I am a first-grade teacher in Rolla, Missouri, and I am also a Doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. I am in the process of working on my dissertation.

While researching possible surveys to gather my data, I came across a paper from a few of your former students. The paper was "The Value of Homework" by Catalina Valdez, Elizabeth Stilgebouer, Bonita Moore, and Melissa Bañuelos. I had a few questions; I am hopeful you could answer.

1. I like the teacher and parent surveys included. Is it possible to use them? Who (and how) do I get in touch with whomever would grant me permission?

2. Other than what was presented in the paper, would there be any other reliability information available for the two surveys?

Thank you for whatever assistance you can provide me, as well as for your time.

Sincerely,

Tonya Heavin

From: **Enrique Murillo Jr**

Date: Mon, Jun 26, 2017 at 9:02 PM

Subject: Re: Doctoral Student

To: Tonya Heavin

Hi Tonya,

These are research projects from one of my Masters in Education courses. The students should have cited or credited the source, if they borrowed the survey. If there is no credit cited, then they themselves created the survey, and you'd then credit the student authors. The papers aren't published anywhere; and since they were students long ago I wouldn't know how to contact them to get permission. You have, however, my permission, as the projects were undertaken under my direction...

Thank you - Gracias, EM

Appendix C

Preliminary E-mail Letter to Superintendents

September 25, 2017

Dear _____,

My name is Tonya Heavin, and I am a first-grade teacher in the Rolla Public School District. Currently I am pursuing a Doctorate in Education degree in the area of Instructional Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from Lindenwood University.

My dissertation will focus on the topic of homework and which aspects of homework (home environment, available resources, volume of homework, or nature of the assignment) influence student growth the most as determined by results of students in grades kindergarten through third grade on the English Language Arts and Mathematics portions of the Missouri Assessment Program at the completion of third grade.

I have selected one small school district and one large school district from three counties in Central Missouri with comparable data (i.e. student enrollment, district-size, etc.) to participate in my study. Your district is one I have selected as a potential source of data.

I am seeking your permission for your teachers in your school district to participate in my study and to allow me to utilize your district data in my research. To gather the data needed for my research, I would need to do the following:

*I would like permission to email your elementary principals and teachers from grades kindergarten through third grade to invite them to participate in a voluntary online survey. The survey will consist of 13 Likert-scale questions and seven

open-ended questions. At the end of the survey the teachers will be given an opportunity to provide an email address if they would be willing to participate in a personal interview. Implied consent will be explained if teachers choose to complete the survey.

*I would like permission to distribute a paper, which would have a link to an online survey for the parents of students in grades kindergarten through third grade. Implied consent will be explained, if parents decide to complete the survey. The survey will consist of 13 Likert-scale questions and seven open-ended questions.

*I would be using the ELA and Mathematics data from 2016-2017 as reported on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

Please know care will be taken to keep all information confidential and no identifying comments or remarks will be included regarding district and/or county. I am also willing to provide you with the results of my research at its completion if you would be interested. I thank you for your time and consideration. If you have questions regarding my research or plans, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tonya Heavin

tonya.heavin@gmail.com

Appendix D

Informational Letter to Building Principals

January 2, 2018

Dear_____,

My name is Tonya Heavin, and I am a first-grade teacher in the Rolla Public School District. Currently I am pursuing a Doctorate in Education degree in Instructional Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from Lindenwood University.

My dissertation will focus on kindergarten through third-grade teachers' perceptions of homework and what possible barriers (home environment, available resources, volume of homework, or nature of the assignment) may exist for homework completion.

I have sought and received permission from your school district's superintendent to utilize your district in my research. I will be e-mailing your teachers in kindergarten through third-grade to invite them to participate in a voluntary online survey. The survey will consist of 13 Likert-scale questions and seven open-ended questions with one additional question just for third grade teachers. Implied consent will be explained if teachers choose to complete the survey.

Please know care will be taken to keep all information confidential and no identifying comments or remarks will be included with the end results regarding district and/or county. I also am willing to provide you with the results of my research at its completion, if you would be interested. I thank you for your time. If you have questions regarding my research or plans, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Tonya Heavin

Appendix E

Recruitment Letter to K-3 Grade Teachers

LINDENWOOD

Survey Research Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: A Mixed Method Study of Kindergarten through Third-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Homework

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Tonya Heavin under the guidance of Dr. Pam Spooner at Lindenwood University. The purpose of this study is to determine teacher perceptions of homework as well as what barriers (a) amount of homework, (b) type of homework, (c) the environment, or (d) available resources inhibit student completion of homework. Your participation will involve completing a short survey about the use of homework in your classroom. There will be 13 Likert-style questions and seven open-ended questions. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

There are no risks from participating in this project. We will not collect any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Tonya Heavin trh088@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Pam Spooner pspooner@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

https://goo.gl/forms/TprOmwtUwUtHrNmZ2

QR Code to Teacher Survey

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window. Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix F

Reminder Letter to Teachers in Grades K-3

January 2018

Dear _____,

This is a reminder the online Google link for the homework survey will close in one and a half weeks. Below you will find the initial survey information sheet which details the survey as well as the survey link. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tonya Heavin

LINDENWOOD

Survey Research Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: A Mixed Method Study of Kindergarten through Third-Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Homework

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Tonya Heavin under the guidance of Dr. Pam Spooner at Lindenwood University. The purpose of this study is to determine teacher perceptions of homework as well as what barriers (a) amount of homework, (b) type of homework, (c) the environment, or (d) available resources inhibit student completion of homework. Your participation will involve completing a short survey about the use of homework in your classroom. There will be 13 Likert-style questions and 7 open-ended questions with one additional question for third-grade teachers only. It will take about 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

There are no risks from participating in this project. We will not collect any information that may identify you. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Tonya Heavin trh088@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Pam Spooner pspooner@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

https://goo.gl/forms/TprOmwtUwUtHrNmZ2

QR Code to Teacher Survey

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window. Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Appendix G

IRB Approval

Review Details

[1163663-1] A Mixed Methods Study of Kindergarten through Third Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Homework

Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board, St. Charles, MO

Submission Details	
Submitted To	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board, St. Cha
Submitted by	Tonya Heavin
Submission Date	12/07/2017
Submission Type	New Project
Local Board Reference Number	

Review Details:

Agenda	Review Type	Board Action	Effective Date	Project Status
01/19/2018 01:00 PM	Exempt Review	Approved	12/21/2017	Active

Appendix H

NIH Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Tonya Heavin** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 06/06/2017.

Certification Number: 2411973.

Vita

Tonya Heavin earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Southwest Baptist University in 1992. Mrs. Heavin began her teaching career in San Benito, Texas teaching first grade. In 1994, Mrs. Heavin returned to Missouri and began teaching in Rolla, Missouri where she is still currently employed as a first-grade teacher. Mrs. Heavin earned her Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from William Woods University in 2004. Mrs. Heavin anticipates earning her Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from Lindenwood University in 2018.