

## **Will incorporating students' culture into the homework assignments in sixth grade improve parental involvement, resulting in an increase of students' completed homework, and ultimately impacting their academic achievement?**

### **Rationale**

One of the most important goals of any educator, (and certainly one of the goals of this action research project) was to increase academic achievement. There is no doubt that parental involvement plays a key role in the students' academic success. However, in my action research the key factor is to understand the Haitian culture and the other cultures of the community and find a way to peak the interest of the students and their families so they have a desire to become involved with their child's education.

The 970 students of Oak Grove Elementary Community School live in a large urban multicultural community. The students in this project are sixth graders: 75% Haitian, 16% African American, 9% Hispanic and 0% Caucasian. The most difficult challenge I have faced is increasing parental involvement and getting students' homework completed and turned in on time. My rationale for this action research was based on critical needs to increase parental involvement and students' academic performance.

### **Research**

According to Harris Cooper, Ph.D., James J. Lindsay, Ph.D., and Scott Greathouse, Ph.D., of the University of Missouri -- Columbia and psychologist Barbara Nye, Ph.D., of Tennessee State University the students in grades six through twelve that complete more homework will do better in school than the students that do not complete homework. The research indicates that the attitude of parents towards homework also plays a key role in the educational process of their child. (1998)

According to the action research of Francine Johnson of Chicago public schools, there are teachers that do not understand the complexity, diversity and social issues that

can influence the development and progress of the student. Johnson explains that every teacher needs to understand the students' families and the role they play in the student's educational process. (2006)

### **Data/Tools**

A multitude of data sources were used for this action research project. A parent and student survey was given at beginning and at the end of the project. These surveys were compared to see if parent involvement improved. I compared the amount of homework assignments turned in during the first four weeks to the amount of homework turned in during the following four weeks, after culture was incorporated into the assignments. In order to see if students' academic achievement improved I recorded each student's grade for each subject before the infusion of culture, as well as, the student's grade for each subject after the infusion of culture. These grades were totaled, averaged, and compared with each other to see if there was a gain in academic achievement.

### **Analysis**

All the results of this project indicated that parent involvement significantly increased students' academic achievement and increased homework assignments turned in. There was a clear increase in parental involvement with homework once the homework assignments incorporated the students' culture. There was a significant gain in the amount of homework turned in and there was a significant gain with regards to academic achievement in all subjects after the infusion of culture. Both the parents and students indicated that they enjoyed the assignments that related to their family's culture.

We as teachers need to be culturally sensitive to the students in our classroom. Cultivating a caring community by incorporating the culture of our students into the lessons and homework assignments will peak the interest of the students in the class. Breaching the cultural barriers will motivate both parent and student to participate in the educational process.

### **Policy Recommendations**

This project recommends that the state develop curriculum that incorporates the cultures of the community. Support from school districts, state and local governments should be given to train and prepare teachers in obtaining family involvement and support. There is a need to develop and implement programs that incorporate and cultivate a culturally sensitive approach to education and integrate parental involvement into the education process. All educators should make an effort to improve student and parent attitudes towards homework and provide parental involvement training to parents in need of assistance.

### **Contact**

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