

HOMEWORK IS ASSOCIATED WITH ANXIETY IN STUDENTS.

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine if homework is associated with anxiety in students. A survey was delivered to medical professionals in a hospital setting in Washington, DC. Only twenty respondents completed the questions. The amount of time the participants were last enrolled in school varied from less than four years, four to six years, seven to ten years and eleven or more years. The results of this study were supported by the majority of respondents who experienced different levels of anxiety while doing homework.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Most people look back on homework as a source of anxiety, and they do not want to spend time on it (Cheema & Sheridan, 2015). Homework is different from the time when parents were in school. The fact is that parents, teachers, and educators struggle to help students with their assignments and this subsequently impacts students' achievement. As a result, homework becomes a source of anxiety in students' daily lives, and they become reluctant to submit homework. It has become a dilemma and a concern for students, educational researchers, teachers and parents about the importance of homework in relation to academic achievement and health matters. Some of the research discussed the impact of homework anxiety on students where the educational research ignored the relationship between homework and anxiety, which affects the students' achievement (Goetz, 2012). Therefore, homework has become an important subject to discuss with regard to the success of students during their years of education. Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) (Grading and Reporting Procedures Manual 2016-2017) discussed homework and its effectiveness in teaching, learning and parents involvement. Furthermore, BCPS had recommendations about homework and how many hours students should spend daily. Other research has indicated that homework is not important: however many researchers believe that homework is related to students' stress (Katz, 2012). In addition, according to Hong (2015) students' achievement is related to homework and it is associated with stress, anxiety, and low self- esteem. Finally, there is a component of the literature that indicates the importance of homework as a positive impact in students' self-esteem and skills by

improving their academic achievement (Baltimore County Public Schools, 2016-2017).

Galloway (2013) confirmed in his study that there is a weak relationship between homework and students' achievement. Ramdass and Zimmerman (2011) discussed in their study how students benefit from homework by improving self-regulation from elementary grades to college.

Research Question

Is homework associated with anxiety in students?

Operational Definitions

Goetz et al. (2012) discussed anxiety as emotions, and which is linked directly to academic learning. Anxiety is defined as a normal emotion, which affects students' feelings such as being nervous during problem solving at school, doing homework, taking a test and decision making. Homework is an instructional tool in a home where parents interact with a child's learning process (Katz, Kaplan, & Buzukashvily, 2011; Wilder, 2014). Perceptions of anxiety levels were measured on a survey presented to medical professionals. Twenty participants responded with different levels of education and years out of school.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review will examine homework anxiety in students. The first part will explore the idea that homework is a cause of anxiety in students' daily life. The second part will review the questionable importance and necessity of homework on students' education and achievement. The third part will discuss and support that homework is important for the student learning process.

Homework Anxiety Affects a Student's Daily Life

Homework is defined as instructional tools in a home environment where parents involve and interact with a child's learning process (Katz et al., 2011). Anxiety is considered a normal emotion where students feel nervous, especially when faced with problems at school, taking a test or doing homework, and making an important decision. Students can develop anxiety while doing homework, which results in unrealistic worry, tension and stress. This feeling of anxiety can have an impact on students' achievements. As Goetz et al. (2012) said, "Emotions of anxiety are directly linked to academic learning, classroom instruction and achievement" (p. 92). Educational research has neglected the relationship between homework and anxiety as a student emotion (Sarason & Mandler, 1952; Zeidner, 2007). Many empirical studies discussed the psychological effects, such as anxiety, on students during homework completion (Xu & Wu, 2013).

A study was conducted by Goetz et al. (2012), which evaluated students' emotions during homework completion. The result of this study confirmed that students experienced multiple emotions while doing homework such as anxiety, anger, and boredom in the

subjects of mathematics, Physics, German and English. Freeman (2007) conducted a study that explained the relationship between homework and cognitive behavior where anxiety and insomnia are problems that students experienced from doing homework. The result of this study showed that students reported negative emotions while doing homework such as stress. Therefore, it was recommended that homework needs to be more effective and more than just a source of anxiety.

Cheema and Sheridan (2015) investigated mathematics anxiety and the time spent on homework and on math achievement. The variables in this study were related to gender, grade, race and socioeconomic status. The result of the study showed a significant effect of both math anxiety and time spent on math achievement. Furthermore, Galloway (2013) discussed in his study the relationship among homework, student well being, and behavioral engagement in a sample of 4317 students from 10 high-performing high schools in upper middle class communities. Galloway's study indicated that students who spent more than 3 hours on homework per night, experienced greater behavioral engagement in school but also more academic stress, physical health problems and lack of balance in their lives. The study described homework as a stressor causing anxiety in students' lives. This study concluded, as a result, that students in middle class and wealthy communities have adequate resources, materials and physical space, more than the other students from families with low income and challenges resources. Yet, Kralovec and Buell (2000) argued that homework does not affect all students equally.

Blazer (2010) has studied students' stress as a source of homework anxiety and states, "Students are under pressure from teachers, parents, and college admissions

counselors to maintain high grade point averages, score well on high-stakes tests, participate in a variety of extracurricular activities, and gain admission to top colleges” (p. 5). This study identifies that students are vulnerable to the consequences of chronic stress such as headaches, stomachaches and tiredness or lethargy. Furthermore, students suffer from insufficient sleep due to busy schedules, anxiety and depression due to students high-stress environments, irritability or unusual emotionality and volatile mood swings or an inability to control their emotions which results in a decrease in academic performance, social withdrawal, and drug or alcohol experimentation. Thus, students become more experienced with cheating and unpermitted collaboration.

A survey was conducted by University of Phoenix College of Education (2014), and the result was that students do not want to spend time on homework and parents more often struggle to help their kids with assignments. Shumow (2008) conducted a study where teachers assigned homework expecting learning enhancement, parental involvement, study skills, work habits and motivation dispositions. This study identified the negative effects of homework on students’ motivation that related to depression or anxiety. The outcome of this study showed that students reported being angry or stressed with parents’ involvements. Cunha (2015) conducted a study about parents’ conceptions of their homework involvement in elementary school. This study showed how parent involvement during homework supported their children’s behaviors while doing their tasks. Parents kept their emotions under control even when their children had negative attitudes. This was “directly related to the parents’ actions to cope with children’s negative emotions while doing homework” (p.160). In a stressful situation, parents play a

constructive role by displaying emotional control strategies, which help children to remain calm and focus on the task.

Homework is Not Important

Katz et al. (2012) studied the stress experienced by students and parents on homework applying Benson's Program of Validation (Benson, 1998). The result supports the connection between stress around homework in that it shows students' sense of competence and self-motivation was affected positively and negatively depending on this connection. Hong (2015) conducted a study that explained how homework does not increase students' achievement, but on the contrary it creates anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, and parent and student conflicts.

Humensky (2010) showed in his study that students from low-income homes do not benefit from homework compared to students from high-income homes. The study indicated that students from low-income homes suffer from anxiety and stress because they do not receive assistance with homework like the other students from high-income homes. Additionally, Potter and Bullitt (2007) reported, in his study "The Homework Myth", the negative feeling of students toward homework assignments. He described how homework is hurting children and he raised the question of what should be done about it. Some researchers claimed that too much homework or more than what is recommended affects students by causing stress, anxiety and negative health effects. The study reflected the inability of students to handle an overload of homework and how it causes stress in students and parents. Donaldson and Pressman (2014) told CNN that children do not benefit from homework to improve their grades or GPA. On the contrary, homework has

negative influences on children's mental attitude about the school, their self-confidence, their social life skills, their grades and their life style.

Galloway et al. (2013) indicates in his study that students from high performance schools where students spent too much time on homework experienced "more stress, physical health problems, a lack of balance in their lives and alienation from society" (p.1).

New research suggests that homework may be an unnecessary task. The research shows there is no positive correlation between assigned homework and student benefit. There is no persuasive support in the research that supports homework. Researchers can manipulate variables or misread them only to determine the correlation in their studies. Galloway et al. (2013) confirmed in his study that there is a weak connection between homework and academic achievement.

Homework Is an Important Task

Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) studied the relations between homework and achievement. He defines homework as assigned tasks by teachers that students carried out during non-instructional time. There is an argument and debate over the effectiveness of homework among teachers, researchers, administrators, parents, and students. Ramdass and Zimmerman (2011) confirmed the relationship between homework and self-regulation from elementary grades to college. This study discussed homework completion and its positive effects on students' self-regulation, and how it helps students to engage and build their self-efficacy, self-reflection, and time management. This study showed a strong positive correlation between homework and students' self-regulation and motivational

beliefs and supported the idea that there is a strong and positive connection between homework activities and self-efficacy, self-reflection, responsibility for learning and maintaining time.

Smith (2000) conducted a study about improving students' study skills aimed at improving academic achievement. Study skills are related to homework, time management, note taking, organization and test taking skills. These skills are important because these cognitive processes are what students need in order to improve their academic performance by helping their own learning in all subject areas. Smith's study was conducted from surveys of parents, teachers, and students. The result supports that homework improves students' attitudes toward school, promotes study habits, aids in the understanding and retention of material, and involves parents in the educational process.

Carr (2013) indicates in her study that students' learning experiences will be improved by homework as an important factor in their education. Xu and Wu (2008) support the findings that homework management is positively associated with learning oriented reasons, affective attitude, self-reported grade, family homework help, homework interest, teacher feedback, and adult-oriented reasons. Cunha et al. (2015) discussed parent conceptions of homework involvement in elementary school. This study showed the positive effects of parent involvement and helping children with their homework. Parents can enhance the positive relationship between themselves and their children "in the promotion of academic learning, fostering children's autonomy, exerting control over their learning, and providing them with emotional encouragement" (p.159). Homework should be a pleasant and constructive experience that is a positive reflection between parents,

teachers, and administrators. Cooper et al. (2006) cautioned, “too much homework may diminish its effectiveness, or become counterproductive” (p.53). Therefore, homework time should be well balanced in students’ daily tasks.

Conclusion

Homework can create and cause anxiety in students, parents and teachers in all levels of the educational system. Some studies stated that there are no benefits from homework in student achievement, yet other studies showed that homework is important in regard to students’ self-efficacy, self-esteem, achievement and interactions between themselves, their parents and their teachers. Some behavioral therapists’ studies showed relationships between homework and cognitive behavior where students can have the opportunity to build their self-efficacy. Other educators established a program for improving students’ study skills and the goal was to diminish homework anxiety by improving academic performance. The questions are therefore raised “What do we need to manage homework anxiety? What steps do we need to establish to help students in their journey?” Baltimore County Public School grading and reporting procedures manual (BCPS, 2016-2017) emphasized the importance of homework as a “part of teaching, learning, and parent involvement” (p.24). Homework should be an opportunity to practice and build the students’ understanding for meeting standards and expectations. Homework assignments must be meaningful and aligned to learning standards. Students should have a clear understanding of the purpose of their homework and be able to see a clear and direct connection between their homework, the standards, and the unit assessments.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This research was conducted to investigate the relationship between homework and anxiety levels in working professionals. Doctors, nurses, administrators and health technologists were given a survey to complete and to express their opinions about homework experiences during their prior years of study.

Design

This is a descriptive study to examine the relationship between anxiety levels and homework. Survey questions were circulated to medical professionals who provided their perceptions about their experiences doing homework and how it impacted their anxiety levels.

Participants

The research was conducted in Medstar Washington Hospital Center, which is located in Washington, DC. Vascular surgeons, cardiologists, doctors, nurses, health technologists and managers completed the survey. Twenty participants completed the survey. The group was heterogeneous with regard to cultural diversity and different levels of education. There were 12 females and 8 males who completed the survey.

Instrument

A survey was used as instrument for this study. It consisted of 17 questions for participants to complete. The survey was completed during a regular morning meeting and was done anonymously. The questions primarily asked the medical professionals how they felt about homework, and if they experienced some levels of anxiety stress, tiredness, and headache. Other questions dealt with what caused anxiety for the participants (see Appendix A).

Procedure

The survey was created under the supervision and direction of a design advisor in February 2017. Before circulating the survey in the hospital, the manager of the department was contacted and informed of the purpose of this survey. The survey was distributed during the morning meeting for the health professionals about hospital policy and ethics. The participants were told that this survey wouldn't take more than 5 to 8 minutes to complete and that it was anonymous and did not relate to their job or the hospital. The participants were encouraged to answer all questions as honestly as possible.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Survey questions were given to medical professionals, and twenty participants completed the survey. Forty-five percent of respondents were last enrolled in school 11 or more years ago. Of those who enrolled 11 or more years 55% indicated they did not avoid enrolling in class and 76% were not afraid that they wouldn't be able to keep up with the rest of class (Table 1). A majority (78%) of these participants claimed that homework kept them away from family and friends, however 89% did not feel hopeless while doing homework. In addition, all of the participants agreed that students should get help and teachers should do more to minimize the anxiety in school.

Thirty percent of the participants were enrolled less than 4 years ago in school. All (100%) of those participants indicated they did not avoid enrolling in class and 84% did not feel stress to go to school. The majority (84%) of these respondents did not feel hopeless while doing homework and they did not experience stress and headaches to go to school. All of the participants agreed that students should get help and 84% agreed that teachers should do more to minimize the anxiety in school.

Twenty percent of the participants were enrolled four to six years in school. These participants indicated that they were not afraid that wouldn't be able to keep up with the rest of the class and 50% of them were not afraid of enrolling in some subjects while 25% percent claimed otherwise. These participants were equally agreed and disagreed that homework kept them away from family and friends. In addition, these participants were equally agreed they experienced stress and headaches and felt hopelessness while doing homework. These twenty

percent of respondents agreed that students should get help and 84% agreed that teachers should do more to minimize anxiety in school.

The majority (80%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat anxious when doing homework. These who responded that they were somewhat anxious were not afraid that they wouldn't be able to keep up with the rest of class (87%) and they did not avoid enrolling in class (69%). They indicated that they did feel stress attending school and they agreed that homework kept them away from family and friends. Eighty percent of these respondents indicated they were not hopeless while doing homework, but they experienced stress and headaches before going to school. The majority (80%) agreed that students should get help and teachers should do more to minimize anxiety in school (table 2).

Sixty five percent of participants indicated that completing homework made them anxious. Of those who indicated yes, 77% were somewhat anxious when doing homework. The participants (86%) who indicated that homework did not make them anxious indicated that they were somewhat anxious when doing homework (Table 3).

Conclusion

Twenty participants completed the survey questions. Sixty-five participants agreed completing homework caused anxiety, and the majority of them felt somewhat anxious, while the others were anxious and very anxious.

Table 1: Responses based on number of years since last enrolled in school.

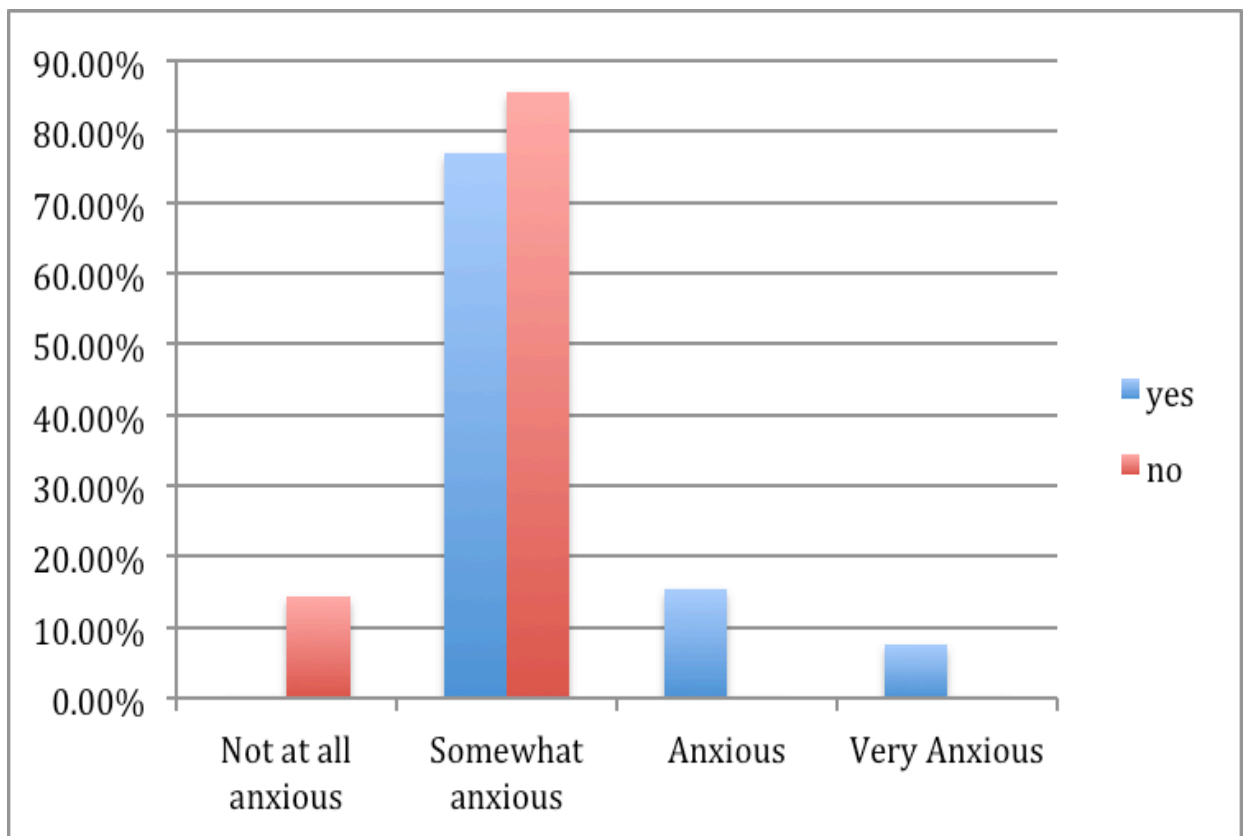
		Less than 4 years%	4-6 years %	7-10 years %	11 or more years %
1. I am afraid I won't be able to keep up with the rest of the class.	Agree	0%	0%	100%	22%
	Disagree	50%	75%	0%	56%
	Strongly disagree	50%	25%	0%	22%
2. I avoid enrolling in some subjects such as Math, Science and English.	Agree	0%	25%	0%	44%
	Disagree	33%	50%	100%	22%
	Strongly disagree	67%	25%	0%	33%
3. I skip class because attending school makes me feel stressed	Agree	17%	0%	100%	0%
	Disagree	17%	25%	0%	44%
	Strongly disagree	67%	75%	0%	56%
4. I feel that homework keeps me from friends, family, and PlayStation.	Agree	33%	50%	100%	78%
	Disagree	50%	50%	0%	11%
	Strongly disagree	17%	0%	0%	11%
5. I feel hopelessness while I am doing homework	Agree	17%	50%	0%	22%
	Disagree	33%	0%	100%	67%
	Strongly disagree	50%	50%	0%	11%
6. I experience stress, headaches, stomachaches and a reluctance to go to school.	Agree	0%	50%	100%	22%
	Disagree	67%	25%	0%	33%
	Strongly agree	17%	0%	0%	0%
	Strongly disagree	17%	25%	0%	44%
7. Students should get help to minimize their own anxiety level.	Agree	83%	75%	100%	89%
	Strongly agree	17%	25%	0%	11%
8. I think that teachers need to do more to minimize the anxiety in school	Agree	67%	100%	0%	78%
	Disagree	17%	0%	0%	0%
	Strongly agree	17%	0%	100%	22%

Table 2: Responses based on levels of anxiety.

		Not at all anxious %	Somewhat anxious%	Anxious %	Very Anxious
1. I am afraid I won't be able to keep up with the rest of the class.	Agree	0%	13%	50%	0%
	Disagree	0%	56%	50%	100%
	Strongly disagree	100%	31%	0%	0%
2. I avoid enrolling in some subjects such as Math, Science and English.	Agree	0%	31%	0%	0%
	Disagree	0%	25%	100%	100%
	Strongly disagree	100%	44%	0%	0%
3. I skip class because attending school makes me feel stressed.	Agree	0%	0%	50%	100%
	Disagree	0%	31%	50%	0%
	Strongly disagree	100%	69%	0%	0%
4. I feel that homework keeps me from friends, family, and PlayStation.	Agree	0%	56%	100%	100%
	Disagree	0%	38%	0%	0%
	Strongly disagree	100%	6%	0%	0%
5. I feel hopelessness while I am doing homework.	Agree	0%	19%	50%	100%
	Disagree	0%	50%	50%	0%
	Strongly disagree	100%	31%	0%	0%
6. I experience stress, headaches, stomachaches and a reluctance to go to school.	Agree	0%	19%	100%	0%
	Disagree	0%	50%	0%	0%
	Strongly agree	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Strongly disagree	100%	31%	0%	0%
7. Students should get help to minimize their own anxiety level.	Agree	100%	81%	100%	100%
	Strongly agree	0%	19%	0%	0%
8. I think that teachers need to do more to minimize the anxiety in school	Agree	100%	81%	50%	0%
	Disagree	0%	6%	0%	0%
	Strongly agree	0%	13%	50%	100%

Table 3: Level of anxiety by whether participants felt anxious when doing homework.

	Not at all anxious	Somewhat anxious	Anxious	Very anxious
yes	0.0%	76.9%	15.4%	7.7%
no	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%	0.0%



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was designed for medical professionals to complete survey questions in a hospital setting. The results of this descriptive study seemed to support that homework is associated with anxiety in students.

Implication of the Results

The result of this study showed that the majority of participants responded that they experienced some kind of anxiety while doing homework. They agreed that homework caused anxiety as well as it kept them away from family, friends and PlayStation. Hence, the majority of participants were not afraid that they wouldn't be able to keep up with the rest of class and they did not avoid enrolling in class. Most of all participants agreed that students should get help and teachers should do more to minimize anxiety in school. It is important to take under consideration that the result of this study is based on the opinions of a small professional group, and further investigations would be needed to generalize the theory of the association between homework and anxiety in students of all grades and in college.

Theoretical Consequences

The result of this study showed the relationship between homework and anxiety in students. The literature discussed the signs and level of anxiety that students experienced while doing homework. Eighty percent of participants felt somewhat anxious when doing homework and 65% answered positively that they think having to complete homework causes anxiety even the 35% of participants who responded negatively were somewhat anxious. This finding correlates with Goetz et al. (2012) study that says students experienced multiple emotions while

doing homework. However, this study excluded students in all 12 grades, college and those who experience different levels of anxiety. Therefore, the twenty medical professionals in this study represent a small group compared to students in college and all levels of 12 grades that encompasses the research in the literature review.

Threats of Validity

This study had a few threats to validity. The survey of this study was created by this researcher and no experts were conducted to review it. The twenty medical participants who completed the survey represented a small sample with different levels of education such as surgeons, doctors, nurses and managers. This study did not include students from colleges, high schools or middle and elementary schools and their opinions about homework anxiety. In addition, this study did not involve teachers, parents and educators to indicate their point of view about anxiety and homework.

Relationship to Literature

The review of literature of this study discussed the forms of anxiety and its impact on students while doing homework. Goetz et al. (2012) evaluated students' emotions and confirmed in his study that students experienced multiple emotions such as anxiety and anger. The survey of this study evaluated multiple emotions. In addition, the survey did not include how much time the participants spent on homework and its impact on their achievement as Galloway et al. (2013) study showed in the literature review. The survey used in this study included grades as a source to make participants anxious similar to what Blazer (2010) discussed in the literature review. Also, the survey did not include the opinions of parents, teachers and educators unlike what was discussed in another study in the literature review (Katz et al., 2012). The result of the

survey of this study supported the finding of previous studies, which showed a positive correlation between homework and students' self-regulation and motivational beliefs and those who experienced some kind of stress and anxiety while doing homework (Ramdass and Zimmerman, 2011). This study looked at twenty medical professionals such as surgeons, nurses and managers who experienced some kind of anxiety, but managed to pursue their dreams and success.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should include students who experienced anxiety and dropped out of school as a result. In addition, future research should differentiate between gender and the impact of anxiety between male and female students while doing homework. Finally a large student population should be considered for future research such as all 12 grades of school and college, not only a small professional group.

Summary

The result of this study showed a slight association between anxiety and homework. Furthermore, the participants in this study managed to succeed in their pursuit of higher education. Future research should include recommendations that help students and encourage them to do homework, not because it is a responsibility and obligation, but as a tool to learn and enhance their knowledge with the help of educators, teachers and parents. It is important to acknowledge homework anxiety and how students feel while doing homework, and what kind of support they need to fulfill their learning and academic achievements.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Date:

Please complete the following items by circling the response that best matches your answer

1. Indicate the number of years since you were last enrolled in school.
 - a. Less than 4 years
 - b. 4-6 years
 - c. 7-10 years
 - d. 11 or more years
2. Indicate your gender.
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other
3. Indicate your highest educational level.
 - a. High School
 - b. Associates Degree
 - c. Bachelor degree
 - d. Master degree
 - e. PHD
 - f. Professional degree (M.D. etc.)
4. Indicate your current profession.
 - a. Medicine doctor/surgeon
 - b. Nurse
 - c. Administrator
 - d. Biomed Engineer
 - e. IT computer
5. Do you think that having to complete homework causes anxiety?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. What makes you most anxious (select one)?
 - a. Grades
 - b. Not knowing class material

7. How do feel when you are doing homework?
 - a. Stress
 - b. Tired
 - c. Happy
 - d. Trapped and hopelessness

8. Indicate your level of anxiety when doing homework?
 - a. Not at all anxious
 - b. Some what anxious
 - c. Anxious
 - d. Very anxious

9. Which subject causes you to feel the most anxiety?
 - a. Math
 - b. Science
 - c. English
 - d. School
 - e. Peers
 - f. Homework

Indicate your level of agree with the following comments:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. I am afraid I won't be able to keep up with the rest of the class				
11. I avoid enrolling in some subjects such Math, English and Science				
12. I skip class because attending school makes me feel stressed				
13. I feel that homework keeps me from friends, family and PlayStation				
14. I feel hopelessness while I am doing homework				
15. I experience stress, headaches, stomachaches and a reluctance to go to school				

16. Students should help to minimize their own anxiety level				
17. I think that teacher needs to do more to minimize the anxiety in school				