

A study of the effects of participation in an after-school homework club

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of a homework club on academic self-concept, psychological sense of school belonging, future aspirations and academic performance. 122 (n=122) participants were involved in this study, all recruited from convenience samples. A quasi-experimental design was used to compare differences between homework club participants and non-participants. The results indicated that participants of the homework club had a higher psychological sense of school belonging and made more of an effort with their school work. There were no statistical differences found between the two groups in either future aspirations or academic performance. The findings suggest that participation in a homework club has some beneficial effects for secondary school students and thereby helps to protect against school disengagement.

Introduction

Engaging students' in school and helping them work towards school completion has long been a challenge for many parents and educators. This can be an even greater task for those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bempechat, Neier, Gillis & Holloway, 2011). The Education Act (1998) defines educational disadvantage as “impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools” (Education Act 1998, s. 32). Retention rates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools are significantly lower than those of non-DEIS post-primary schools. There was a retention rate of 73.2% among DEIS schools in 2004 compared to 87.4% for non-DEIS schools over the same period (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). The DEIS initiative is designed to assist schools to meet the needs of students at risk of early school leaving.

Through the School Support Programme a range of comprehensive supports are provided to designated disadvantaged schools. The School Completion Programme (SCP) is one form of support provided. The SCP “aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and post-primary schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete the senior cycle” (Department of Education & Science, 2005, p.6). The SCP delivers a range of supports to young people aged between 12 and 17 who are identified to be at risk of early school leaving. Supports include; in-school supports (e.g. attendance tracking and breakfast clubs); out-of-school (e.g. home visits and incentive trips); after-school (e.g. homework clubs and parental support) and holiday time supports (e.g. summer camps and literacy support). The present study is designed to determine if participation in one of these supports, namely, the homework club in a rural secondary school

in Co. Westmeath, affect's student's academic performance, academic self-concept, future aspirations and psychological sense of school belonging. The homework club is a primary prevention method, universal to all students of the school and proactive in nature. While supports such as behavioural interventions and home visits are selective in targeting students identified to be at risk, whole school supports avoid the requirement for identification and thereby avoid any stigma attached to participation. The controversy surrounding funding for DEIS initiatives leads to questions as to whether after-school programs fulfil important academic and social functions (McCárthaigh, 2012). Drawing on the scientist-practitioner model, educational psychologists are increasingly more focused on evidence based interventions (EBI) and their role in providing an estimate of the return on investment.

Young People at risk of Early School Leaving

Adolescence has been characterised as a time of 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904, as cited in Arnett, 2007). Yet some young people are exposed to even greater levels of stress and life-factors that place them at risk. According to the cumulative risk model, there is no single risk factor that is more damaging than any other (Lucio, Hunt & Bornovalova, 2012). The more risk factors a student has, the greater the likelihood the student is to experience school difficulties. Early school leaving seems to be the result of multiple factors across many domains, with factors often interacting with each other (Smyth, 2005). There are individual, family, social, academic and school predictors related to early school leaving. Risk factors for early school leaving include disruptive behaviours, a family history of underachievement, socioeconomically disadvantaged, low or failing grades and poor relationships with teachers and peers (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot & Pagani, 2009; Bessant, 2002). However, the evidence suggests that poor academic achievement is the

strongest predictor of dropping out of school (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, & Hawkins, 2000; Lucio et al, 2012). Accordingly, prevention measures such as the homework club aim to provide positive educational support to young people at risk of academic failure and early school leaving. The current study will assess the academic performance of all participants to allow for comparison between the two independent groups; those participating in the homework club and non-participants.

Many Researchers (e.g. Smyth, 2005) challenge the current conceptualisation of early school leavers. Smyth (2005) argues that labelling students 'at risk' does little but reinforce a blaming explanation. When this tag is assigned to students, it places blame with the individual and the family and shifts the focus from the political and social forces that led to the situation. Research suggests that, at the heart of decisions to leave school lie students profound boredom, a rejection of assigned school tasks, a school culture that does not invite students to share their social and emotional problems, and an atmosphere that is generally not conducive to "establishing strong positive relationships with peers" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1988, p.364). This lack of engagement is frequently cited in the literature based on the principles of self – determination theory (Hardre & Reeve, 2003). The process of disengagement can begin early in a young person's academic career and evolves over time resulting in eventual dropout (Archambault et al., 2009).

One study interviewed 80 participants, aged 17 – 21 who had dropped out of school, for some the process of disengagement had begun even before the child started school (Lessard, Butler-Kisber, Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin & Royer, 2008). Family turmoil was evident for 55% of participants; cited experiences included divorce, parental abuse, parental neglect, parental criminal activities, placement in foster care or family services and the death

of a parent. Participants discussed methods utilised to ‘prolong the educational journey’, for example; drug taking as a form of escapism which ultimately gave them the confidence to remain in school, at least for a short while. Participants were also questioned about their perceptions on the value of school. According to Lessard et al. (2008) some participants were unable to link their education with their future, which placed them at risk of leaving school. The positive school experiences of participants were characterised by the presence of a member of staff who the participants perceived to be caring, patient, available and rewarding. School related factors referred to by participants included failing grades, a perception of an inability to catch up and feelings of rejection (e.g. suspension).

With regard to these factors, Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed an ecological model to emphasise the importance of considering the child in their own context. This approach is based on the assumption that a child’s development is the result of proximal interactions that the child has with various factors in their environment, including; social, environmental and political. The young person’s family and their school are part of the microsystem, the inner circle to which the child belongs (Bee, 1997). Behaviour that a young person demonstrates is the result of multiple factors and interactions occurring on different levels which all influence each other (Bekerian & Levey, 2012). In this sense, the educational, emotional and social needs of each child must be considered in the context of the child’s development. The current study acknowledges the multi-dimensional, interactional concept of development and emphasises the importance of considering the environmental influences on education. Consequently, the psychological, social and academic factors will be investigated to provide a holistic account of educational outcomes.

Protective Factors

Like the family, the school is an equally important context for child and adolescent development (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Educational researchers (e.g. Goodenow, 1993; Eccles & Roeser, 2003) have called for empirical studies to address the links between psychological, social and educational processes. There is a distinct lack of research on the academic affects of participation in homework clubs and even less research on the social, emotional and psychological benefits of participation.

Within the risk-resiliency framework there are a number of protective factors that can buffer the effects of adversity that predisposes a person to a maladaptive outcome (Benard, 2004). A sense of connectedness, opportunity for participation, contribution, and high expectations are protective factors that can build a person's resiliency (Karapetian-Alvord & Johnson-Grados, 2005; Benard, 2004). The protective factors that families provide, such as care, support, high expectations, participation and involvement, are those that are provided by effective schools (Eccles & Roeser, 2003; Benard, 2004). Similar to the authoritative parent, effective schools set clear goals and rules, exhibit good control, and are high in communications and nurturance (Bee, 1997).

Furthermore, Liu, Wang and Parkins (2005) believe that the recent shift towards the social and affective aspects of education has led to the recognition that academic self-concept is a viable predictor of educational outcomes. Academic self-concept refers to a person's knowledge and perception of themselves with regard to achievement in school (Marsh, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Köller & Baumert, 2005). The basic premise is that those who perceive themselves to be effective will fare better academically than those with less positive

efficacy beliefs (Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke, Köller & Baumert, 2005). Academic self-concept is formed through experience, influenced by the environment and heavily influenced by social comparison (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). In line with this, Marsh (1984) as cited in Marsh (1992) developed the big-fish-little-pond effect (BFLPE) model which is based on the premise that academic self-concept is determined by the comparison of one's academic performance with immediate peers (Marsh et al., 2005). Research has shown positive relationships between academic self-concept and academic achievement, motivation and effort (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Academic self-concept becomes more stable and realistic with age and has positive relationships with student's effort ratings and academic achievement (Marsh et al., 2005). According to Marsh (1992) educational interventions such as extra-curricular homework programs that achieve short-term changes in academic achievement and skills can have a positive effect on academic self-concept. The current study will explore young people's academic self-concept and specifically aim to determine whether there is a significant difference in academic self-concept of those participating in the homework club and non-participants. This study also aims to identify the relationship between academic self-concept, student effort and academic performance.

In addition to academic self-concept, a sense of belonging and social acceptance is an important psychological need throughout the lifespan (Maslow, 1962). This need for belonging and acceptance becomes even more prominent during adolescence as young people consider their identity (Erikson, 1950). Children who feel a sense of attachment towards their school do better academically and as a result, are less likely to leave school early (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Beck, 1999). A sense of school connectedness or belonging involves a commitment to one's school, to working at that school, and a sense that achievement and ability is recognised by others' (Pittman & Richmond, 2007). Anderman (2003) highlights

two main influences on psychological sense of school belonging, namely, academic factors (e.g. homework completion, school achievement) and social factors (e.g. relationships with teachers and peers). An absence of connectedness often leads to disengagement which is a major predictor of academic failure and school dropout.

Goodenow (1993) found that a psychological sense of school membership was positively correlated with motivation and school achievement. In addition, Leone and Richards (1989) examined the contexts in which young people do homework. They hypothesised that doing homework with peers would positively affect their experience of homework and in turn affect academic performance. There were no significant differences found between those who did homework alone and those who did homework with peers, but students did report greater levels of arousal and affect when doing homework with peers rather than alone (Leone & Richards, 1989).

Closely connected to school belonging is the recognition that relationships are central to school engagement. Relations with teachers and peers have a profound effect on how students perceive school as a whole (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001). These relationships can serve as a protective factor against disengagement and eventual dropout (Benard, 2004). In addition, those who stay in school experience positive relationships with teachers and peers, and report positive affect towards their teachers and the school (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Beck, 1999).

In line with this, Pianta (1999) as cited in Marcus and Sanders-Reio (2001) describes the teacher-student relationship in terms of attachment theory. Healthy relationships between the teacher and student are characterised by low conflict, high warmth, open communication and student autonomy. While unhealthy teacher-student relationships are characterised by

conflict, negative emotion, insecurity and dependency (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001). After-school homework assistance programs have similarities with the school classroom, namely they provide opportunities for teacher-student relationships to develop and mature through instruction, support, trust, care and the fostering of a sense that all students are valued as members of the school community (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). These relationships can positively impact the student's sense of belonging to the school (Pierce, Hamm & Vandell, 1999). Participants in the current study will complete the psychological sense of school belonging scale and a comparison will be utilised between students of the homework club and non-participants.

The importance of a sense of connection between a student and their school cannot be underestimated as a significant predictor of early school leaving. As well as this, research indicates that students' future aspirations can reliably predict their intention to remain in or leave school early. According to Worrell and Hale (2001) future aspirations are based on an individual's desire to obtain a status, object or goal, such as a particular occupation or level of education. Adolescent's aspirations are important as they influence the behavioural choices a young person makes (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Likewise, future aspirations actuate the activities a young person engages in, which in turn may affect academic outcomes (Nurmi, 1991). Thus, Worrell and Hale (2001) examined the relationship between school climates, hope for the future and school dropout. The school climate can be described as the personality of the school, it involves student's perceptions of respect, trust, care and opportunity for growth and development within their school (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Worrell and Hale (2001) found that hope for the future significantly predicted school dropout in comparison to school climate. Benard (2004) supports this finding and states that it is future educational aspirations, not actual academic achievement that is the most powerful

predictor of school graduation. For these reasons, the current study will also investigate the future aspirations of student's participating in the homework club and non-participants.

Finally, research suggests that doing well in school can prevent school disengagement and eventual dropout. Battin-Pearson et al. (2000) tested the adequacy of theories regarding family socialisation, academic achievement and general deviance and found that academic achievement was the most significant predictor of early school-leaving. However, the research on the effects of homework clubs on academic performance is mixed. Morrison et al. (2000) as cited in Cosden, Morrison, Albanese and Macias. (2001) found that homework clubs for primary school children prevented a decline, rather than an increase in academic performance for participants. Cosden et al. (2001) found a positive difference in academic performance between primary school children who regularly attended an after school academic assistance program and lower attendees. In contrast, Keith, Diamond-Hallam & Fine (2004) found that homework clubs had no effect on academic performance. The current study will explore young people's academic performance and compare differences between homework club participants and non-participants.

Homework

Homework is often cited as a source of stress among students and parents, and can create friction between home and school. Moreover researchers have questioned teachers' practice of assigning tasks to be carried out during non-school hours (Copper, 1989). The literature on homework is immense and can be distinguished between those who are critical of the pervasive homework strategies adopted by the majority of schools (e.g. Kohn, 2006; Galloway & Pope, 2007) and those who are in favour of homework (e.g. Copper, 1989). Kohn (2006) suggests homework should only be assigned where there is a justifiable benefit

to students, not simply assigning homework as a matter of policy. Homework must have a clear purpose and young people must understand the reasons why they are doing a particular piece of homework (Bembenutty, 2011). Kohn (2006) recommends that students are involved in decisions affecting them; the homework that is given and the amount of homework.

Galloway and Pope (2007) hypothesised that homework is a source of stress among urban high school children and that this may impact on their physical and mental well-being. Students, in their study, spent an average of 3.04 hours on homework each night and 65% reported being stressed out by schoolwork in general. 31.9% of the sample reported doing 3.5 hours or more per night and these students reported greater stress and poorer physical and mental wellbeing than those in the first group (Galloway & Pope, 2007). The authors' state that there are mixed results regarding the homework achievement link and Bembenutty (2011) concludes that no consensus has been reached on the practice of homework. This prevents firm conclusions on the nature of the relationship between homework and achievement (Bembenutty, 2011). In the current study, academic performance is measured using teacher's mock report cards. School teachers will be asked to rate students' performance in Maths. This subject was chosen as an overall indicator for academic performance as it is one of the compulsory subjects in primary and secondary schools. Over the years, there has been a great deal of controversy surrounding the utility and applicability of the maths curriculum to real life problem-solving. An indication of this is the low number of students taking the higher level maths paper for the Junior and Leaving Certificate (Roantree, 2012). Project Maths aims to reform the teaching methodology. The new approach emphasises investigation of mathematical concepts in groups and independently. It is envisaged that this will enhance the students learning experience, allow for greater

understanding and suitability to problems faced in third level and in employment (Roantree, 2012).

Copper (1989) carried out a large meta-analysis of studies comparing the achievement of students assigned homework and students given no homework; 14 of these studies favoured homework, while six favoured no homework. These studies demonstrated that post-primary students doing homework outperformed those in the no-homework class by 69%. In addition, Copper (1989) reviewed studies correlating the amount of time students spent on homework with achievement levels; 43 studies indicated a correlation between the amount of time spent on homework and academic achievement. This research suggests that the more time the student spent on homework, the better the student performed academically.

Copper, Robinson and Patall (2006) conducted a second meta-analysis and again found a strong positive correlation between the amount of homework students do and their academic achievement. However, it seems that where too much homework is assigned it may be counterproductive (Copper et al., 2006). Paschal, Weinstein and Walberg (1984) found that the benefits of homework on academic performance were greater when it was graded. Moreover, Copper (1989) found that homework that was checked and where feedback was given to students had a greater impact on academic achievement than homework that was assigned but not checked.

Despite the absence of a consensus regarding homework it remains a persuasive strategy in the majority of schools. However, it continues to be a major source of stress for many students and parents (Van Voorhis, 2011). In one school study parents helped their children with homework, on average, between one and three times a week and checked homework four times a week (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Parents report that homework drains

time and energy. Parents' state that they spend time trying to explain assignments and trying to motivate their children by making assignments more interesting (Van Voorhis, 2011). Furthermore, parents often feel ill-equipped to help their children with homework (Kay, Fitzgerald, Paradee & Mellencamp, 1994). With regard to supervision, in Ireland the peak time for youth crime is between 2p.m and 6p.m on school days (Redmond, 2009) as many children are without adult supervision for some time after-school. These findings highlight the important function of homework assistance clubs as provision of safety and supervision for young people during out-of-school hours (Cosdon, Morrison, Albanese & Macias, 2001). Halpern (1992) supports this view and states that homework clubs can provide young people with an emotionally and physically safe place to go. The current study aims to determine the potential protective functions a homework club can provide for students. Copper et al. (2006) states that adult mentors can provide stability for adolescents and young people who are engaged with adult mentors perform better in school and are less likely to leave school early.

Homework Clubs

A homework club can be described as an after-school support which provides a structured environment for students to complete their homework (Department of Education and Science, 2005, p.17). Homework clubs serve as a preventative method for school failure and early school dropout (Beck, 1999). According to Cosden et al. (2001) homework clubs can improve academic performance, develop social skills and increase competency.

Homework clubs provide routine, structure and predictability for children who may not get this at home (Halpern, 1992). Cosden et al. (2001) suggest that after-school homework clubs can serve as a protective factor for children at risk of school failure through the provision of positive adult support.

Findings from studies investigating the benefits of extra-curricular activities such as drama, sports, hobby clubs and formal after school programs, suggest participation in such can prevent against early school dropout (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997) and can benefit children at risk of social and adjustment problems (Pierce, Hamm & Vandall, 1999). Marsh (1992) found that extracurricular activities can enhance academic self-concept, and a commitment to school and future aspirations which in turn can have a beneficial effect on academic performance. In comparison, there are relatively few studies specifically examining the role of homework assistance clubs and associated educational and psychological outcomes (Cosden et al., 2001).

Beck (1999) carried out a qualitative review of an afterschool program based in the United Kingdom, for low-income, African-American, young people from kindergarten through to 12th grade. After-school activities included music, art and recreation as well as a requirement that young people participate in 45 minutes of academic development, during which they receive assistance with homework. Beck (1999) maintains that the provision of time and structure for homework completion is the cornerstone to the success of the program. In fact, one of the main outcomes of this research was that children reported more confidence in their academic performance. However, this study contains a number of flaws; firstly, it was based on qualitative methods which can threaten the reliability of the study through researcher bias. Furthermore, the absence of a control group limits the capacity to draw firm conclusions regarding the effects of the homework program. Alternatively, the focus of the current study is on the potential benefits derived from participation in an after-school homework assistance program.

Conversely, Morrison, Robertson, Harding, Weissglas and Dondero (2000) as cited in Cosden et al. (2001) evaluated an after-school program using quantitative methods. This

program offered academic tutoring and cultural enrichment activities as well as homework assistance to 350 students from a low-income school and found that, after one year, the program had served a protective function by maintaining a bond for the student with their school. Although this effect varied depending on the degree to which the student attended the program.

Another study which has demonstrated the benefits of participation in after-school program is one by Tucker, Chennault, Brady, Fraser, Gaskin, Dunn and Frisby (1995) as cited in Cosden et al. (2001). Researchers evaluated a two year program consisting of academic tutoring and adaptive skills training for low achieving, low income children. No significant increases were found in grades for the treatment group but the control group showed a significant decrease in academic performance. This suggests that the program served as a protective factor for participants. The literature specifically focuses on the evaluation of after-school programs offering academic assistance in addition to other types of activities and supports, making it difficult to determine the effects of homework clubs alone (Cosden et al., 2001).

On the other hand, Cosden et al. (2001) evaluated the outcomes of the Gervitz homework project which was implemented to provide homework assistance alone. Primary school students were required to attend 50 minutes of supervised sessions, four times a week over a three year period. The remaining students at the end of the third year of the program were assessed on homework completion, academic performance, self-efficacy, and future aspirations. The researchers found no significant differences on homework completion, however, when participants were divided into groups based on their attendance, those rated as having high attendance had higher reading, math and language scores than low attendees

(Cosden et al., 2001). In addition, higher attendees reported more self-efficacy and higher future aspirations.

In addition, Keith, Diamond-Hallam and Fine. (2004) carried out a large scale longitudinal study comparing the academic outcomes of over 13,000 children doing homework in-school and children doing homework out-of-school. Keith et al. (2004) found that on average students aged 15 spent 4.43 and students aged 17 spent 6.86 hours per week on homework out-of-school. The research suggests that out of school homework had strong positive effects on learning while in –school homework had little or no effect on learning.

The majority of published research has focused on pre-school and primary school children, which presents a major gap in the literature as secondary school student's participation in homework assistance programs is frequently under-researched (Cosden et al., 2001). The current study aims to determine whether there are differences in academic self-concept, psychological sense of school belonging, future aspirations and academic performance between participants of the homework club and non-participants. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by providing data on the psychological, social and academic outcomes of young people aged between 12 and 17 at risk of early school leaving and examining the effects of an academic based intervention to prevent early school leaving.

The Current Study

The purpose of this research is to determine if participation in the homework club based in an Irish secondary school affect's student's academic performance, academic self-concept, future aspirations and sense of school connectedness. The four variables have been chosen because research suggests that these factors protect against disengagement in school

and therefore prevent early school dropout. Interventions to prevent early school leaving should therefore foster students' sense of belonging, motivation, self-esteem, and hope for the future, as well as their academic performance. Additional questions will provide information on age, gender and perceptions of parental involvement in academic performance, amount of time typically spent on homework, levels of satisfaction with the homework club, who, if anyone is present while homework is being carried out and how often parents ask about homework. These questions will allow for greater clarity and comparison between participants doing their homework at home and those students of the homework club.

On this basis, there will be two independent groups involved in the research, the experimental group will be the students who attend the homework club on a regular basis and the control group will be the students who have chosen not to participate in the homework club at the present time. It is intended that this study will enhance knowledge of school based prevention practices in reducing early school leaving, specifically by exploration of the factors which create a nurturing environment for young people to remain at school. The homework club is offered on a whole school basis; therefore participation is unbiased and accessible to those who choose to avail of the support. This is the first time there has been an attempt to evaluate the effects of the homework club in this region.

This study will investigate the effects of participation in an after-school homework club. The five hypotheses are:

1. There will be significant differences in academic self-concept for students participating in the homework club compared to non-participants.
2. There will be significant differences in the psychological sense of school connectedness for students participating in the homework club compared to non-participants.

3. There will be significant differences in future aspirations for students participating in the homework club compared to non-participants.
4. There will be significant differences in academic performance for students participating in the homework club compared to non-participants.
5. The study will also investigate additional dependent variables (e.g. perceptions of parental involvement in homework).

Method

Materials

A questionnaire booklet was given to each participant (see appendix 1), this included three published questionnaires and one purpose designed questionnaire. The three published questionnaires were the academic self-concept questionnaire (Liu & Wang, 2005), the psychological sense of school memberships scale (Goodenow, 1993) and the future aspirations scale (East, 1996). The wordings of the questionnaires were adapted for suitability for Irish students (e.g. high school was changed to secondary school). The purpose designed questionnaire consisted of eight questions and sought the following data: participant information (e.g. age and gender), time spent doing homework, who was usually present during homework and enjoyment of homework. A published mock report card (see appendix 2) was also given to teachers to rate the academic performance, work habits and work effort of each student.

Apparatus

Demographic variables were collected in part A of the questionnaire (see appendix 1). Participants' were asked to indicate their gender and age. Additional items included those related to homework (e.g. *how much time do you typically spend on homework each night?*) and those related to their perceptions of parents' involvement in homework (e.g. *How often do your parents ask you about your homework?*). Participants of the homework club also answered two additional questions on the quality of the homework club.

ASC. The academic self-concept scale was developed by Liu and Wang (2005) comprising of two self-report subscales, namely, academic confidence (10 items) and academic effort (10

items). The academic confidence subscale assessed participants' feelings and perceptions about their academic competence. Sample questions included '*I am good in most of my school subjects*' and '*Most of my classmates are smarter than I am.*' The academic effort subscale assessed students' commitment too, involvement and interest in schoolwork. Sample questions included '*I am interested in my schoolwork*' and '*I study hard for my tests.*' Answers were given on a four-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Scores were calculated for each subscale to give an overall indication of academic self-concept. High scores on the instrument indicated a high of academic self-concept. Liu and Wang (2005) reported Cronbach's alpha of .82 for academic confidence, .71 for academic effort and .76 for internal consistency.

PSSM. The psychological sense of school membership scale was designed by Goodenow (1993) consisting of 18 self-report items that are measured on a 5-point likert type scale, with answers ranging from *not at all true* (1) to *completely true* (5). The PSSM scale assessed participants' sense of belonging to or their feelings of being a part of the school in general (e.g. *I feel like a real part of this school*). The scales also assessed participants' perceived sense of being liked, feeling accepted, being included, respected and encouraged to participate. High scores on the instrument indicated a high psychological sense of school membership. Goodenow (1993) reported the scale as having a Cronbach's alpha ranging between .77 and .88 for internal consistency.

FO. The future orientations scale was originally developed by East (1996) consisting of 7 items assessing participants future goals with two self-report subscales namely, *importance* (4 items) and *likelihood* (3 items) of the participants finishing secondary school, going to college, being successful in a career, and the perceived importance of such to the participants

mother. Response choices ranged from *not important* or *very unlikely* (1) to *very important* or *very likely* (4). High scores reflected a strong importance and likelihood placed on school and future achievements. East (1996) reported a Cronbach's Alpha of .70.

MRC. The mock report card was originally developed by Pierce, Hamm and Vandell (1999) to indicate participants' academic grades and work habits. Teachers' indicated their students' grades in mathematics on a 5-point likert scale ranging from *failing* (1) to *excellent* (5).

Work habits were rated by teachers on a 5-point likert scale ranging from *very poor* (1) to *very good* (5). Sample items included '*works well independently*' and '*keeps materials organised*' (see appendix 2). Item scores were averaged to create a single work habits score.

Pierce et al. (1999) reported an initial Cronbach's Alpha of .93 for internal consistency.

Participants

The sample consisted of two independent groups. The homework club group consisted of 25 males and 23 females (N=48) and the control group consisted of 48 males and 26 females (N=74). A total of one hundred and twenty-two participants (N=122) completed the questionnaire. The overall age range was twelve to eighteen years (mean= 14.23, SD=1.649). The mean age for homework club participants was (mean=13.70, SD=1.412) and the mean age of non-homework club participants was (mean=14.56, SD=1.708).

Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental (between groups), correlational design to compare differences between homework club participants and non-homework club participants.

Subsequently, the primary independent variable was participation in the homework club.

Additional independent variables included perceived parental involvement, amount of time spent doing homework per evening, where homework was usually carried out, enjoyment of

homework and perceptions of usefulness of doing homework. The dependent variables were academic self-concept, psychological sense of school membership, future orientations and academic performance and work habits.

Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the principal and deputy-principal of the secondary school to conduct the study (see appendix 3). A briefing was held with the mathematics teachers' and the researcher explained the purpose of the study. The teachers were given instructions to pass onto the students to complete the questionnaire. Teachers were also given instructions on completing the mock report card. All questionnaires were coded prior to distribution and each teacher received the coded questionnaires corresponding to their own students. This coding allowed the researcher to identify each participant's questionnaire pack with the corresponding mock report card. The teachers then distributed the questionnaires during class time and the maximum time taken to complete the questionnaire was 15 minutes. The researcher remained in the school while students' were filling out the questionnaire to answer any queries.

Data Analysis

Normality of distribution could not be assumed due to inequality in sample sizes, consequently non-parametric tests were utilised to analyse the data. The hypotheses of this study were analysed using several statistical analyses. Firstly, descriptive statistics were used to examine totals and means on all of the variables. Secondly, Mann Whitney U tests were used to test for significance between the independent groups (homework club participants and non-homework club participants) on academic self-concept, psychological sense of school membership, future aspirations and academic performance. Correlation coefficients were conducted to examine the possible association of all the dependent variables and the

demographic variables and lastly, if correlations were found Mann Whitney U tests were used to test for significance between the two independent groups.

Results

There were 122 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 73 (59.8%) were male and 49 (40.2%) were female. 48 (35.3%) participants made up the homework club participants group while the remaining 74 (54.4%) made up the non-homework club participants group. Ages ranged from twelve to eighteen years with a mean age of 14.2 years. Of the 48 participants from the homework club group, 25 (52.1%) were male and 23 (47.9%) were female, ages ranged from twelve to seventeen and the mean age was 13.70 years ($SD=1.412$). Of the 74 participants from the non-homework club group, 48 (64.9%) were male and 26 (35.1%) were female, ages ranged from twelve to eighteen years and the mean age was 15.56 ($SD=1.708$).

Part A

Means for academic confidence, academic effort, and psychological sense of school belonging, future importance, future likelihood and academic performance across the two independent groups are displayed in Table 1 below. Cronbach's alpha results showed that the academic self-concept (20 items; $\alpha = .88$) scale, psychological sense of school belonging (18 items; $\alpha = .90$) scale, future aspirations (7 items; $\alpha = .86$) scale and the mock report card scale (11 items; $\alpha = .96$) were highly reliable. The participants of the homework club reported higher levels of academic effort (mean=29.91, $SD= .74304$) than non-participants (mean=26.82, $SD= .54979$). To investigate these differences further and to check for significance a Mann Whitney U test was carried out. Results revealed that academic effort was significantly higher ($U=1002.5$, $n=122$, two tailed, $p= 0.00$) in the homework club participants groups than the non-participants group. This result shows partial support for the first hypothesis and suggests that participants of the homework club put more effort into their school work than non-participants.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for academic confidence, academic effort, psychological sense of school belonging, future importance, future likelihood and academic performance among homework club participants and non-participants.

Variable	Homework Club Participants		Non-participants	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Academic confidence	27.72	.64642	27.32	.5208
Academic effort	29.91	.74304	26.82	.54979
Sense of school belonging	71.55	13.036	64.74	13.446
Future importance	15	1.796	14.12	2.421
Future likelihood	10.67	1.961	10.08	2.059
Academic performance	38.08	8.580	38.55	9.311

The means scores for academic self-concept were similar across groups. Homework club participants had a mean score of 27.72 (SD=.64642) and non-participants indicated a mean score of 27.32. These differences were found to be insignificant. Participants of the homework club reported higher means of a psychological sense of school membership (mean= 71.55, SD= 13.036) than non-participants (mean=64.74, SD= 13.446). A Mann Whitney U test found that the psychological sense of school membership scores from participants of the homework club were significantly higher than non-participants ($Z=1132.5$, $n=117$, two tailed, $p= 0.004$). This result supports the second hypothesis and suggests that participants of the homework club have a higher psychological sense of school belonging.

Homework club participants reported higher means of future aspirations than non-participants. The mean scores of homework club participants (mean=15, SD=1.796) indicated a higher sense of importance to finish secondary school, go to college and be successful in a career than non-participants (mean= 14.12, SD=2.421). These differences were investigated using a Mann Whitney U test and no significant differences were found ($Z=1138$, $n=122$, two tailed, $p= 0.070$). The mean scores of homework club participants (mean=10.67, SD=1.961) indicated a higher sense of likelihood that they would finish secondary school, go to college and be successful in a career than non-participants (mean=10.08, SD= 2.059). However, a Mann Whitney U test revealed that there were no significant differences in future likelihood between the two groups ($Z=1444$, $n=122$, two tailed, $P=0.071$). Interestingly, the data indicated that mean scores for academic performance of non-participants of the homework club (mean=3.31, SD=1.158) were higher than homework club participants (mean=2.92, SD=1.182). However, a Mann Whitney U test showed there were no significant differences in academic performance between the two groups.

Part B

Correlations were computed to determine whether there was a positive relationship between academic self-concept, psychological sense of school membership, future aspirations and academic performance. Results are displayed in table 2 below. A Spearman's rho correlation showed a strong positive relationship between academic confidence and academic effort ($r = .51$, $df = 115$, $p = 0.00$). This indicates that as academic confidence increases so too does academic effort. A Spearman's rho correlation showed a moderate positive relationship between academic confidence and psychological sense of school membership ($r= .42$, $df=111$, $p=0.00$). This result suggests that as academic confidence increases so too does

psychological sense of school membership. Results showed a moderate positive relationship between academic confidence and future importance ($r=.41$, $df=112$, $p=0.00$) suggesting that as academic confidence increases so too does the future importance of finishing secondary school. A moderate positive relationship was found between academic confidence and future likelihood ($r=.49$, $df=115$, $p=0.00$) suggesting that as academic confidence increases so too does the student's perception of their likelihood of finishing secondary school.

Table 2

Spearman's rho correlations between academic self-concept, psychological sense of school membership, future aspirations and academic performance.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Academic confidence	-					
Academic effort	.518**	-				
Sense of school membership	.425**	.506**	-			
Future importance	.411**	.480**	.262**	-		
Future likelihood	.499**	.470**	.396**	.710**	-	
Academic performance	.486**	.201*	.249**	.260**	.263**	-

*. Significant at $p<0.05$

**.. Significant at $p<0.01$

A moderate positive relationship was found between academic confidence and academic performance ($r=.46$, $df=115$, $p=0.00$). This result suggests that as academic confidence increases so too does academic performance. A strong positive relationship was found between the variables of academic effort and psychological sense of school membership ($r=.50$, $df=115$, $p=0.00$) suggesting that as academic effort increases so too does psychological sense of school membership. A moderate relationship was found between

academic effort and future importance and future likelihood ($r=.48$, $df=116$, $p=0.00$) ($r=.47$, $df=120$, $p=0.00$). These results suggest that as academic effort increases so too does future aspirations. A weak positive relationship was found between academic effort and academic performance ($r=.20$, $df=120$, $p=0.026$). This suggests that as academic effort increases so too does academic performance.

A weak positive relationship was found between psychological sense of school belonging and future importance ($r=.26$, $df=111$, $p=0.005$) suggesting that as a sense of school membership increases so too does the importance of finishing secondary school. A weak positive relationship was also found between psychological sense of school belonging and future likelihood ($r=.39$, $df=115$, $p=0.00$) suggesting that as psychological sense of school membership increases so too does the perception of the likelihood of finishing secondary school. A weak positive relationship was also found between psychological sense of school belonging and academic performance ($r=.24$, $df=115$, $p=0.007$). The results showed a weak positive relationship between future aspirations and academic performance ($r=.26$, $df=116$, $p=0.005$), ($r=.26$, $df=110$, $p=0.003$). This result suggests that as future aspirations increase so too does academic performance.

Part C

Frequencies and percentages for time spent on homework, parents asking about homework, enjoyment of homework and preference for doing homework around others or alone for both groups are presented in Table 3 below. The data showed some inconsistencies between homework club participants and non-participants. A comparison between the groups showed that non-participants (mean= 2.46, SD= .863) spent slightly more time on homework than participants (mean= 2.35, SD= .668). Comparisons showed a higher percentage of respondents from the homework club group (52.1%) reported being

asked about homework by their parents almost every day than in the non-participants group (50%). While homework club participants (8.3%) reported a higher level of enjoyment of homework than non-participants (1.4%).

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of time spent on homework, parents asking about homework, enjoyment of homework and doing homework around others.

Characteristic	Homework club participants		Non-homework club participants	
	N	%	N	%
Time spent on Homework				
Less than 30 minutes	1	2.1	8	10.8
30 minutes - 1 hour	33	68.8	33	44.6
1-2 hours	10	20.8	25	33.8
2-3hours	4	8.3	7	9.5
More than 3 hours	0	0	1	1.4
How often parents ask about homework				
Never	3	6.3	17	23
1-2 times per week	12	25	15	20.3
3-4 times per week	7	14.6	5	6.8
Nearly every day	25	52.1	37	50
Enjoyment of homework				
Strongly disagree	6	12.5	26	35.1
Disagree	9	18.8	19	25.7
No opinion	13	27.1	22	29.7
Agree	15	31.3	5	6.8
Strongly agree	4	8.3	1	1.4
Preference of carrying out homework around others or alone				
Strongly disagree	5	10.4	16	21.6
Disagree	7	14.6	27	36.5
No opinion	5	10.4	12	16.2
Agree	22	45.8	15	20.3
Strongly agree	8	16.7	4	5.4

A Spearman's rho correlation found a weak negative relationship between the participants age and academic performance ($r = -.12$, $df = 117$, $p = .194$) suggesting that as age increases academic performance decreases. There was also a weak negative relationship between age and academic confidence ($r = -.097$, $df = 112$, $p = .306$) suggesting that as age increases academic confidence decreases. A weak negative relationship was found between age and academic effort ($r = -.27$, $df = 117$, $p = 0.003$) indicating that as age increases academic effort decreases. Similarly, a weak negative relationship was found between age and psychological sense of school belonging ($r = -.17$, $df = 112$, $p = .056$). A weak positive relationship was found between time spent on homework and academic performance ($r = .197$, $df = 120$, $p = .030$). Figure 1 below shows the rating of the homework club. Among the homework club participants group, 20 (41.7%) rated the club as very good. Furthermore, 18 (37.5%) participants suggested that they were very likely to recommend the homework club to a friend.

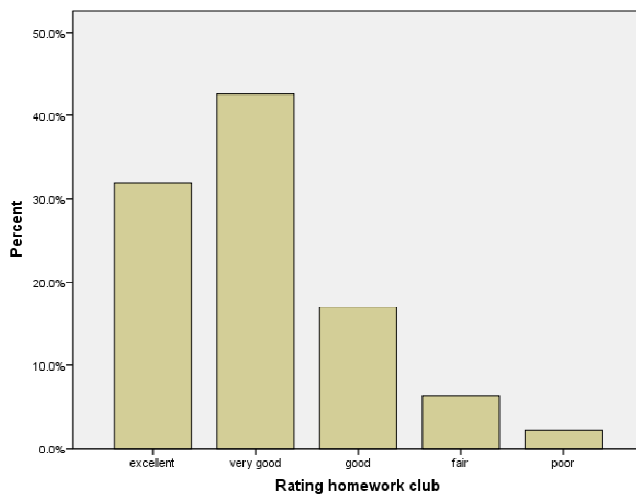


Figure 1.

Rating of the homework club.

Discussion

The aims of this research were: a) to determine whether academic self-concept, future aspirations, psychological sense of school belonging and academic performance was likely to be higher among participants of the homework club and b) to investigate the relationships between academic self-concept, future aspirations, psychological sense of school belonging and academic performance. The findings will be discussed in relation to the hypotheses of this study and in relation to published literature. Limitations and implications of the present study are addressed and recommendations for future research are also explored.

The first hypothesis (H1) stated that there would be significant differences in academic self-concept for students participating in the homework club compared to non-participants (see section 3A). The Liu and Wang (2005) academic self-concept scale has two subscales, namely academic effort and academic confidence. The findings of this study indicate that academic effort was significantly higher for participants of the homework club than non-participants, suggesting that participation in a school based homework club increases student's effort in their school work. Secondly, there were no significant differences found in academic confidence between the two groups. No published research has compared the academic self-concept of participants in homework clubs and non-participants. However, research suggests that primary school children benefit from participation in after school homework clubs in terms of positive perceptions of their academic ability and increased academic effort (Beck, 1999; Marsh, 1992).

In addition, correlation coefficients showed a positive relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance suggesting that as academic self-concept increases so too does academic performance (see section 3B). This finding is supported by the literature which suggests that academic self-concept is a significant predictor of academic performance (Marsh, 1992). There were no significant gender differences in academic confidence but female participants reported higher academic effort than their male counterparts. A negative relationship was found between age and academic self-concept. Academic confidence peaked among 12 year old participants and declined thereafter. This finding supports research which suggests that academic self-concept, particularly for at-risk youth, declines as students' progress through the school system (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Similarly, academic effort peaked for 12 year old participants and gradually declined thereafter up until the age of 17 when it increased. These findings are supported by the research which suggests that motivation, self-perceptions (e.g. academic self-concept) and academic effort declines substantially from the age of 13 until it peaks again at the age of 17 (Marsh et al., 1991; Eccles & Roeser, 1999). Researchers have offered several explanations for these negative outcomes seen in the literature. From a developmental perspective, the transition from primary to secondary school is believed to be detrimental for some students' academic self-concept, particularly those at risk of early school leaving (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Factors such as the new classroom environment, new teachers' and peers, and an increased emphasis on assessment and achievement can create disillusionment for many students'. Marsh et al. (2005) argues that as young people begin to develop more realistic evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses with age this is reflected in their academic-self concept.

The second hypothesis (H2) stated that there would be significant differences in school connectedness between students participating in the homework club and non-

participants. Results confirmed that students participating in the homework club had a higher psychological sense of school connectedness (see section 3A). This finding supports literature on primary school children, which suggests that homework assistance programs can positively impact a students' sense of belonging to a school (Pierce et al., 1999) and adds to the limited body of research on the effects of homework clubs for adolescents. Anderman (2003) suggests that there are two main influences on psychological sense of school belonging, namely social and academic factors. The social relatedness associated with participation in the homework club may occur through the provision of supportive peer and adult mentor relationships which are important for preventing school alienation and eventual school dropout (Holt, Bry & Johnson, 2008). On the other hand, Copper et al. (1998) suggests that it is the sense of achievement from homework completion which increases school connectedness. Cumulatively, these influences have a positive impact on students' well-being. Overall, students' who have a strong sense of belonging and attachment with their school are less anxious, more pro-social, value education more, have intrinsic motivation, lower rates of absenteeism and participate in school more (Cemalcilar, 2010). Interestingly, the current study found that psychological sense of school belonging declines with age. It is reasonable to expect that school belonging would increase over time, as young people spend more time with peers, teachers and the school, however, this study found that despite being in school longer, older students' report lower levels of school connectedness. However, this finding is supported by current literature which suggests that school connectedness decreases over time, particularly from the age of 15 to 18 (Anderman, 2003; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, Abbott, 2001). Given that the findings of the current study suggest that homework club participation increases psychological sense of school belonging, it is reasonable to assume that the provision of the homework club increases

students' sense of school belonging and therefore helps in preventing school alienation and early school leaving (Cemalcilar, 2010).

The third hypothesis (H3) stated that there would be significant differences in future aspirations between students' participating in the homework club compared to non-participants. This hypothesis was not supported by the findings of the current study which is inconsistent with the literature (see section 3A). Studies involving primary school children suggest that future aspirations are higher for participants of academic based after-school activities than non-participants (Cosden et al., 2001). This finding can be interrupted in a number of ways. Firstly, published research focuses on the future aspirations of primary school children. In contrast, adolescents are able to think abstractly and are able to plan for the future with a realistic appraisal of their own strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. In the current study, homework club participants had a mean age of 13.70 compared to a mean age of 15.56 for non-participants, which suggests that younger children have more positive aspirations for the future compared to older students (see section 3). A second possibility for this inconsistency can be linked to the suggestion that not only participation, but frequency of participation at homework clubs predicts the degree to which future aspirations are increased for participants (Cosden et al., 2001). Future aspirations are heavily influenced by academic confidence and school performance and building competencies and forming new behaviour patterns takes time. Therefore, attendance rates among homework club participants may generate a greater understanding of the link between participation in academic based after school clubs and future aspirations. In addition, the current study found a weak positive relationship between academic performance and future aspirations, suggesting that as academic performance increases so too does future aspirations.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) stated that there would be significant differences in academic performance for students' participating in the homework club and non-participants. This hypothesis was not supported by the findings of the current study (see section 3A). Research is extremely limited in this area, particularly in relation to adolescents (Keith et al, 2004; Copper et al, 2006). However, the findings of the current study are supported by Keith et al. (2004) who found that carrying out homework within the school context had no effect on learning; homework carried out at home had strong positive effects on learning. Furthermore, Kohn (2006) believes that the positive link between homework and achievement is not universal. Tucker et al., (2000) cited in Cosden et al., (2001) suggest that homework clubs prevent a decline in academic performance rather than result in increases.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) was to investigate additional dependent variables, such as time spent on homework, perceptions of parental involvement in homework and students' reported enjoyment of homework. The current study found that homework club participants spent less time on homework than non-participants which could also account for differences in academic performance (see section 3D). One plausible explanation for this finding is that students who complete their homework at home are more intrinsically motivated than participants of the homework club (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). Overall there was a positive relationship was found between time spent on homework and academic achievement. This finding supports research by Copper et al., (2006) who compared primary school students randomly assigned to a homework class and a no-homework class. Students' assigned to the homework condition significantly outperformed students of the no-homework group.

Implications

The cumulative risk model offers a perspective which can contribute a greater understanding of early school leaving. In addition to academic strategies, interventions to prevent early school leaving must address the psychological and social factors related to school drop-out. To address the problem of school disengagement, interventions should be geared towards fostering a sense of community and achievement. The current study found that the protective factor of a psychological sense of school belonging was positively associated with participation in the homework club. A psychological sense of school belonging involves positive peer relations and supportive teacher-student relationships. For this reason, prevention efforts should be geared towards increasing teachers' awareness of their role in the process of school disengagement. According to James (1996, p. 53) as cited in Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (2001):

Every day requires joy and success if there is to be a reason to go to school tomorrow. The friendship and society of other young people is what schools have going for them..this is what brings the students at risk back and this is what we need to be more skilled at tapping into.

Feelings of frustration, isolation and eventual self-exclusion are a reality for many young people in challenging circumstances. Prevention interventions must acknowledge this and plan programs that encourage peer-relations and student-teacher relationships. Peer mentoring is one such way in which positive peer relationships can be facilitated by school. This can be daunting for educators, however studies indicate that once young people are trusted, they often act in mature and responsible ways (Morrison, Everton, Ruddock, Cannie & Strommen, 2000). Peer mentoring programs for second level pupils have been shown to

increase school motivation and enhance self-esteem for both the mentor and mentoree (Morrison et al., 2000).

Interventions aimed to address early school leaving should also aim to enhance academic self-concept. Marsh et al. (2005) emphasise the reciprocal effects of academic self-concept. Enhancement of young people's academic self-concept results in better academic performance and better academic performance leads to a higher academic self-concept. Therefore interventions must address both academic self-concept and academic performance. Interventions are unlikely to have long term effects unless both academic skills and student confidence is addressed

The current study advances the limited body of existing research in two key ways. Previous research has shown the benefits of participation in after-school homework clubs for primary school children. The current study extends knowledge in this area by exploring the potential benefits of an after-school homework club for adolescents. Secondly, this study joins a small number of studies which consider the psychological and social variables in predicting educational outcomes. The current study found that that participants of the homework club report a higher psychological sense of school belonging and school effort. There were no differences found in academic confidence, future aspiration or academic performance. Perhaps the primary function of homework clubs for secondary school students is to provide a safe, structured environment for homework to be completed. However, the findings of the current study highlight the importance of future research in this area to empirically validate preventions programs. Future research could explore the features of the homework club, the structure and routine for participants and link this with potential outcomes.

Limitations

The findings of this study support the published literature on academic-based homework clubs. However, this study contained a number of flaws. Firstly, this study used a purposive sampling method. This makes it difficult to generalise the findings of the current study to all student populations. Secondly, the study contained an inequality in sample sizes, the homework club group made up 35.3% of the sample while the remaining 54.4% consisted of the no intervention group. A more even sample from both independent groups would provide more valuable data. In this study, teachers' reports of academic performance were used instead of actual academic performance. Although teacher based assessments of students' academic performance show high validity with actual performance future research could measure performance using test scores instead. In addition, the measure of academic performance reported by teachers was based on mathematics. The time constraints of this project did not allow for the measurement of additional subjects. Future research could examine academic performance in relation to additional subjects, such as English and art. Academic self-concept is multi-faceted; therefore young people have subject specific self-concepts. Taking this into account may yield different results in relation to academic performance and academic self-concept. Finally, due to time restrictions the current study could only test at one point in time. Longitudinal research could be beneficial to see if there are differences across groups at two points in time.

In conclusion, this study has adopted a resiliency perspective in attempting to identify the protective factors fostered in young people as a result of participating in an after-school homework club. The identification and assessment of positive features of young people's schooling is essential to understanding prevention of early school dropout. This represents a much needed shift in focus from the risk factors to the protective factors involved in early

school leaving. The results of this study support the research suggesting that homework clubs build the protective factors of psychological sense of school belonging and partially support the enhancement of academic self-concept.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS

As a secondary school student at [REDACTED] you have the opportunity to participate in a study assessing your perceptions on homework. Since there is very little information on this topic, your participation is important for the advancement of research on this topic. Your participation is strictly voluntary, so you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation is confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of research.

Please answer each question as best you can by ticking the appropriate box. This is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire and do not identify yourself in any way.

QUESTIONNAIRE: PART A

- Are you male female
- What age are you? _____
- Where do you typically do your homework?
 - At the homework club in Castlepollard Community College
 - At home
 - In a friend's house
 - Elsewhere, please state: _____
- Who, if anyone, is usually present when you do your homework?
 - No-one
 - Teachers from the Homework Club
 - Mum or Dad
 - A family friend
 - A grandparent
 - Other, please specify _____
- How much time do you typically spend doing your homework each evening?
 - Less than 30 minutes
 - 30 minutes to 1 hour
 - 1-2 hours
 - 2-3 hours
 - More than 3 hours
- How often do your parents ask you about your homework?
 - Never
 - 1 or 2 times a week
 - 3 or 4 times a week
 - Nearly every day

Please state, to what level you agree with the following statement:

- I enjoy doing my homework.

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

- I find it easier to do my homework when I am around others.

Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

THE FOLLOWING 2 QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ANSWERED BY STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE **HOMEWORK CLUB ONLY**:

- Overall, how would you rate the homework club?

Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very good	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>

- How likely are you to recommend the homework club to a friend?

Very likely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Likely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very Unlikely	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART B

Please read through the following statements and circle whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

I can follow the lessons easily.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I day-dream a lot in class.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am able to help my classmates in their schoolwork.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I often do my homework without thinking.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

If I work hard I can go to an Institute of Technology or University.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I pay attention to the teachers during class.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Most of my classmates are smarter than I am.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I study hard for my tests.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

My teachers feel that I am poor in my work.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am usually interested in my schoolwork.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I often forget what I have learnt.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am willing to do my best to pass all my subjects.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I get frightened when I am asked a question by the teachers.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I often feel like quitting school.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am good in most of my school subjects.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am always waiting for the classes to end.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I always do poorly in tests.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I do not give up easily when I am faced with a difficult question in my schoolwork.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I am able to do better than my friends in most school subjects.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I do not want to put any more effort into my school work.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

PART C

Please circle the most appropriate answer for each statement.

NT=Not true at all

RT=Rarely true

ST=Sometimes true

UT=Usually true

CT=Completely true

I feel like a real part of Castlepollard Community College

NT RT ST UT CT

People here notice when I'm good at something

NT RT ST UT CT

It is hard for people like me to be accepted here

NT RT ST UT CT

Other students in this school take my opinions seriously

NT RT ST UT CT

Most teachers at Castlepollard Community College are interested in me

NT RT ST UT CT

Sometimes I feel like I don't belong here

NT RT ST UT CT

There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem

NT RT ST UT CT

People at this school are friendly to me

NT RT ST UT CT

Teachers here are not interested in people like me

NT RT ST UT CT

I am included in lots of activities at Castlepollard Community College

NT RT ST UT CT

I am treated with as much respect as other students

NT RT ST UT CT

I feel very different from most other students here

NT RT ST UT CT

I can really be myself at this school

NT RT ST UT CT

The teachers here respect me

NT RT ST UT CT

People here know I can do good work

NT RT ST UT CT

I wish I were in a different school

NT RT ST UT CT

I feel proud of belonging to Castlepollard Community College

NT RT ST UT CT

Other students here like me the way I am

NT RT ST UT CT

PART D**NI**-Not Important**SI**-Somewhat Important**I**-Important**VI**-Very Important

How important is it to you that in the future...

	NI	SI	I	VI
You will finish secondary school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You will go to college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You will be successful in a career?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How important is it to your Mum that you continue your education beyond secondary school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

VUL-Very unlikely**ALL**-A little likely**ML**-Moderately Likely**VL**-Very likely

How likely do you feel it is that in the future...

	VUL	ALL	ML	VL
You will finish secondary school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You will go to college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You will be successful in a career?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**WELL DONE AND THANK-YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS
QUESTIONNAIRE!**

Appendix 2

TEACHERS MOCK REPORT CARD

Student Number: _____ (please see list provided).

1. Indicate how the young person is performing in mathematics

Below=young person is performing below grade level

Needs improvement=young person needs to improve quality of work at this grade level

Satisfactory=young person is performing at grade level

Very good=young person is doing high-quality work at this grade level

Excellent=young person is performing beyond grade level.

Below	<input type="checkbox"/>
Needs improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very Good	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please indicate the young person's work habits:

VP=Very poor, **SP**=Somewhat poor, **AV**=Average, **G**=Good, **VG**=Very good

	VP	SP	AV	G	VG
Follows classroom rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Works well independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Works neatly and carefully	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uses time wisely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completes work promptly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keeps materials organised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completes work to my satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is attentive in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participates in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hands in homework promptly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank-you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Appendix 3

[REDACTED]
Co. Westmeath

5th September 2011

[REDACTED]

Co. Westmeath

Dear [REDACTED],

I am enrolled as a final year, part-time psychology student at Dublin Business School. Dublin Business School psychology students are required to complete an independent research project during their final year of study. As a teacher at [REDACTED], I am requesting permission to collect research data at your school. All research conducted is done for the purposes of meeting course requirements and all results obtained are strictly anonymous.

The aim of my proposed project is to ascertain if participation in the homework club increases student's academic performance, academic self-concept, future aspirations and sense of school connectedness. There would also be an evaluative element to the study, whereby, I would seek the opinions of the students on their experiences of participation in the homework club. It is hoped that this research would offer insights into the efficacy and benefits of participating in this programme, both on a personal and academic level.

To conduct this research, I would request that all [REDACTED] students complete a short questionnaire during school time. This would include students who are members of the homework club and those who have chosen not to participate in the club thus allowing for a comparison of the effects of participation in the homework club. All students and teachers would be provided with detailed instructions and have the option to opt-out of the study at any time.

The project is expected to be completed by April 2012 with the aim of collecting data from the school in November/December 2011. Upon completion of the project I will provide the school with a copy of the research as well as a brief summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusions.

I have attached a permission slip as written permission is required by Dublin Business School. I welcome the opportunity to discuss specific details of my research study with you. You can also contact my advisor, [REDACTED], in the Department of Psychology at [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,

Laura Mc Loughlin.
[REDACTED]