THE EVALUATION OF A FAMILY INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

(TRIPLE P) TEACHING INDEPENDENT HOMEWORK SKILLS

Jasmine Murphy

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Education
# CONTENTS

Chapter One: Abstract .................................................................................................................. 4

Chapter Two: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 5

Chapter Three: Method ............................................................................................................. 13
  Participants .......................................................................................................................... 13
  Measures ............................................................................................................................. 15
  Experimental Design ........................................................................................................... 18
  Procedure ............................................................................................................................ 19

Chapter Four: Results ............................................................................................................... 22
  Homework Problem Checklist ............................................................................................... 22
  Percentage of Homework Completed .................................................................................... 25
  Percentage of Homework Correct ........................................................................................ 28
  On-Task Behaviour .............................................................................................................. 30
  Quiz Scores .......................................................................................................................... 33

Chapter Five: Discussion ......................................................................................................... 36
  Ann ...................................................................................................................................... 37
  Joe ..................................................................................................................................... 39
  Tania ............................................................................................................................... 40
  Simon ............................................................................................................................... 42
  Sally .................................................................................................................................. 45
  Additional Benefits of the Intervention ............................................................................... 46
  Homework Content ............................................................................................................ 48
  Research Limitations ......................................................................................................... 50
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 54

References .............................................................................................................................. 56

Appendices:
  Appendix A: Sample of a Quiz ............................................................................................. 58
  Appendix B: Triple P Homework Tip-sheet .......................................................................... 59
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.  Homework Problem Checklist Scores ................................................. 23

Figure 2.  Percentage of Homework Completed ................................................ 26

Figure 3  Percentage of Homework Completed Correctly .................................. 29

Figure 4  Percentage of Intervals spent On-Task ............................................. 31

Figure 5  Quiz Scores ....................................................................................... 34
CHAPTER ONE

ABSTRACT

The present study evaluated the effectiveness of the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video by measuring changes in children’s homework difficulties, levels of accuracy and completion of homework tasks, academic achievement and classroom behaviour. Goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures were also investigated in response to additional support requested by the parents as the study progressed. Participants included five parent-child dyads that were selected from a single primary school in the Christchurch area. The study was conducted using an ABCD multiple baseline design. Results show that the use of the Triple P homework resources, and the subsequent implementation of goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures, improved parents’ ratings of homework problems, improved homework completion and accuracy, improved academic achievement, and improved most of the participant’s on-task behaviour. In conclusion, this intervention provides a positive and manageable approach that provides parents with realistic strategies designed to help them manage their children’s homework problems. Additional benefits of the intervention for parents and their children are discussed, and issues pertaining to the relevance of homework content.
CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

Homework is an effective, cost-efficient academic activity that acts as a valuable contributor to children’s learning by improving their academic achievement (Jenson, Sheridan, Olympia & Andrews, 1994; Miller & Kelley, 1994). Research on homework interventions has consistently found that time spent engaging in homework tasks results in a number of positive effects on student’s well being and learning (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998; Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson, & Andrews, 1994). For instance, Keith & Page (1985) investigated the effects of homework on students’ grades and found that time spent on homework was the second best predictor of student’s academic achievements after ability. Increased homework time was positively associated with improved achievement across ability levels, as it resulted in higher grades and achievement at school (Keith & Page, 1985). Other research (Gajria & Salend, 1995; Miller & Kelley, 1994; Olympia et al., 1994) has also shown that homework:

i) improves students’ study habits,

ii) improves students’ attitudes towards school,

iii) provides a valuable link between home and school, which is essential for the development of reciprocal communication between settings in terms of optimising children’s learning experiences, and

iv) provides an additional source of academic learning time to help students practise and reinforce new skills/concepts. This consequently facilitates the development of understanding and retention of knowledge.

This overview makes it clear that homework is an important factor associated with academic achievement, as it provides the foundation for managing homework tasks by introducing
students to a suitable learning environment and effective study habits at a young age (Olympia et al., 1994).

The positive relationship between homework and academic achievement has been well documented; however, engagement in homework tasks can also result in a great deal of stress for many children and their families (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). The effects of homework seem to be two-fold. On the one hand, many children succeed by improving their levels of academic achievement and developing a positive attitude about schoolwork, on the other hand, homework may result in further problems for children as it provides an additional source of stress for many families. Parents may encounter a number of associated behaviour problems when trying to get their children to do their homework (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). For example, in primary school children, homework time may be associated with resistance or non-compliance, distractibility from completing homework, and poor rates of homework productivity (Kahle & Kelley, 1994). Such problems may result in conflict between children and their parents and result in unnecessary stress for parents when trying to help their children complete homework tasks.

Parental problems associated with getting children to engage in homework tasks is a well-documented area and homework has long been known to be a complex issue. For instance, the process involved in completing homework is rarely performed in the idealised manner for which teachers intended it; that is, where homework functions to provide children with additional time to practise and reinforce skills learnt in the classroom and the opportunity to establish links between teachers and parents (Balli, 1998; Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). While parents play a significant role in helping their children manage daily homework tasks by enabling and enhancing positive affect, not all parents are naturally capable of providing...
appropriate instruction, or an adequate learning environment (Balli, 1998). For instance, parents who are under stress, experiencing mental health problems, or are disorganised themselves may not be suitable for helping their children complete homework (Carrington, Lehrer, & Wittenstrom, 1997). Therefore, children’s homework problems can be created by insufficient parental involvement.

Furthermore, parents who lack the motivational and organisational skills needed for helping their children complete homework may unintentionally model inappropriate methods for engaging in homework. For instance, parents who have insufficient time may focus on the product (i.e. getting it done) rather than concentrating on the importance of the process associated with helping their children learn the necessary skills to complete homework accurately. By encouraging their children to work through the process parents increase the likelihood that these skills will be remembered and subsequently used in the future by their children when working on similar tasks. Rosenberg (1989) investigated the effects of homework on the acquisition and fluency of new skills in students with learning disabilities. Results indicated that homework was most effective when students completed it correctly and demonstrated at least moderate acquisition of the content (Rosenberg, 1989). This highlights the importance of working through homework tasks gradually rather than parents merely giving their children the answers, as this restricts their child’s learning opportunities and the probability of retaining new knowledge or skills. In addition, parents who neglect to help their children work on homework tasks can also have detrimental effects on the child’s learning as this can result in incomplete or incorrect homework because the child does not understand how to complete the homework tasks independently. By focusing on the process, parents can ultimately facilitate the development of effective study habits and help their children develop a more in-depth understanding of the curriculum content that is embedded in their homework
tasks. In summary, it is evident that factors associated with insufficient parental involvement and inadequate parenting skills can only exacerbate children's homework problems.

One intervention that has been shown to be effective in reducing children’s homework problems and increasing levels of homework completion is contingency-contracting (Miller & Kelley, 1994). Contingency-contracting is based on the basic principles outlined by Premack's Law whereby any activity which a child chooses to engage in (high probability behaviour) can act as a reinforcer for the completion of any less preferred activity (low probability behaviour) (Church, 1999). Therefore, interventions that utilise contingency contracts are designed to structure the environment in such a way that high probability behaviours (e.g. television time) can only be accessed after the low probability behaviour is performed (e.g. homework completed). Contingency contracts can also be designed so that failure to complete a low probability behaviour results in the withdrawal or denial of access to the child’s preferred activity. This will inevitably act either as an aversive consequence for the child who will eventually be motivated to complete the low probability behaviour to escape future incidents of this kind (negative reinforcement) or as a form of negative punishment for the child whereby the likelihood that the child will engage in behaviours which compete with homework completion will decrease (Church, 1999). Goldberg, Merbaum, Even, Getz, & Safir (1981) examined the efficacy of training parents to use contingency management techniques. Results show that the use of contingency-contracting produced significant improvements in their children’s homework performance relative to the other experimental conditions (Goldberg et al., 1981).

Another intervention that is known to reduce children’s homework difficulties is the implementation of goal-setting procedures (Kahle & Kelley, 1994). Goal-setting is a process
whereby different properties of a child’s goal (i.e. to complete homework) are manipulated to produce improvements in academic functioning (Miller & Kelley, 1994). For instance, children who experience problems associated with producing tidy homework may devise a weekly goals timetable that targets this behaviour. For example, the child’s goal maybe to ‘complete my language tasks neatly’. In order to achieve this goal the child must complete the behaviour targeted for improvement. Implementation of goal-setting procedures has consistently produced improvements in children’s levels of on-task behaviour, academic achievement and motivation across a wide range of abilities and ages (Bandura & Schunk, 1981).

In addition, goal-setting procedures can be integrated into the arrangement of a contingency contract, which consequently increases the efficacy of both interventions (Miller & Kelley, 1994). In reference to the above example whereby the goal is to complete homework neatly, a contingency contract would be devised to reward the child once a predetermined number of goals had been achieved within a set time. For example, the child may have to achieve five goals associated with completing homework neatly over a week before a reward was given. Miller & Kelley (1994) examined the combined effects of goal-setting and contingency contracts on homework performance. Results showed that the interventions administered together produced significant improvements in children’s homework accuracy (Miller & Kelley, 1994). Furthermore, Kahle & Kelley (1994) investigated the efficacy of two treatments, parent training and goal-setting with contingency-contracting, for reducing homework problems and improving homework production. Their results also showed that children in the goal-setting and contingency-contracting group demonstrated significant increase in homework accuracy and productivity in comparison to the children in the parent-training group that didn’t implement these procedures (Kahle & Kelley, 1994).
Although the use of goal-setting and contingency-contracting relies heavily on parent involvement in terms of monitoring and administering rewards, it is relatively easy to implement and requires minimal involvement in the long run. Ideally, parents are required to provide the management structure and the necessary support and encouragement while their children work independently on homework tasks in an effort to achieve their predetermined goals. Thus, the responsibility is placed on the child to complete the homework and the pressure/stress experienced by the parents is reduced to a manageable level. Another advantage of using this type of combined intervention is that it directly addresses the manner in which children initiate and complete homework tasks (Miller & Kelley, 1994). It focuses on the process of achieving successive goals when completing homework instead of concentrating on the final homework product, which is an important distinction.

The Triple P programme is a multilevel parenting and family support initiative designed to provide advice and professional support to families who have children who experience behavioural and social problems (Sanders, 1999). One of the main aims of this positive parenting programme is to provide parents with practical information that helps them manage their child’s behaviour effectively without requiring too much time or energy (Sanders, 1999). Over the past 12 years, the Triple P organisation has conducted a great number of empirical studies aimed at researching and assessing various strategies to make parenting easier and more enjoyable (Sanders, Turner, & Markie-Dadds, 1996). As a result, Triple P has developed a number of self-directed information resources for parents to use when implementing behaviour management techniques within their home environment. These resources are provided in the form of positive parenting tip-sheets and a series of videos. These describe how to apply practical strategies in an effort to overcome common behaviour and
developmental problems faced by children and their families (Sanders, Turner, & Markie-Dadds, 1996).

Within this series is a component dedicated to managing homework problems experienced by primary school children. The Triple P homework tip-sheet and video provide practical suggestions on how to prevent and manage common behavioural problems that arise when children are working on homework tasks. Incorporated into the suggestions outlined in the homework tip-sheet and video are fundamental principles associated with goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures. These strategies are described in a comprehensible manner and provide realistic examples for parents of how to implement these complex procedures effectively in order to reduce homework difficulties. In this study, the homework tip-sheet and video were used to teach parents these techniques in order to help them facilitate the development of their children’s self-responsibility for completing homework tasks independently.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video by measuring changes in children’s homework difficulties, levels of accuracy and completion of homework tasks, academic achievement and classroom behaviour. Goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures were also investigated. These were instituted as additional support in response to parents’ requests as the study progressed. So serial use of the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video, parent training in goal-setting and contingency-contracting were investigated. Increasing assistance was provided to each family based on desired additional support. Firstly, parents were provided with the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video without any formal instruction. Secondly, if parents were still experiencing difficulty in implementing the Triple P strategies and goal-setting procedures effectively they
were given direct training in these skills. Finally, if necessary, parents were assisted to devise a formal contingency contract that provided direct contingencies when their children achieved the goals that had been set.

The ultimate aim of this study was to produce increased independence in the children’s time management and organisational skills which in turn would facilitate the development of self-responsibility for homework and enable them to complete academic tasks independently. Ideally, the children would take responsibility for initiating their homework and learn to prompt the use of their parents as a resource when necessary. It was hypothesised that the Triple P homework resources would reduce homework problems and improve homework production as a function of the effective implementation of these strategies by parents. Furthermore, it was expected that the development of self-responsibility would improve

i) parent’s ratings of homework problems on a standardised checklist,

ii) the children’s homework completion and accuracy scores,

iii) on-task behaviour in the classroom, and

iv) academic achievement.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Participants
Prior to the recruitment of participants for this study, an application was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Canterbury. This application was subsequently approved and the process of selecting participants began. Participants included five parent-child dyads. The five children were selected from a single primary school in the Christchurch area. The primary school had a school roll of 147 students when this study was conducted and a Decile Ranking of 2, indicating that it is situated in a low-socio-economic area.

Selection was based on parent responses to a flyer that was distributed within the senior classrooms. This advertised help for parents experiencing homework problems with their children. Interviews were conducted with the first five families to notify the school principal of their interest in this study. The child’s position within the multiple baseline design was assigned randomly during the interviews. Selection criteria excluded children with other serious behaviour problems. All participants were white and of low to middle socio-economic status. Four of the children lived within solo mother families, and the other participant’s parents lived together.

Ann
Ann was a 10-year-old Year 6 student whose homework problems stemmed from the demands associated with her sporting commitments which left her minimal quality time to complete homework tasks. Her mother’s main concern was that Ann showed a lack of time-management skills when organising a balance between her sport and homework commitments.
and that Ann was always too tired to complete her homework satisfactorily. Ann's mother also felt that she maintained most of the responsibility associated with initiating Ann's homework and she wanted to eliminate the arguments that evolved from trying to get Ann to complete her homework. Furthermore, Ann's constant refusal and/or negative reactions towards her mother's requests were escalating and causing unnecessary conflict.

Joe

Joe was a 10-year-old Year 6 student whose main homework problems were related to his inability to stay focused when instructed to complete his homework and his lack of commitment towards completing homework tasks. Joe was easily distracted by noises around him and he spent a lot of his time daydreaming or looking for ways to avoid homework tasks. In addition, Joe's stepmother was worried about his lack of independent study skills, as Joe showed little motivation with respect to initiating homework or taking responsibility for completing it, even though he seemed to be a highly intelligent child.

Tania

Tania was a 10-year-old Year 5 student whose main homework problems resulted from her inability to concentrate on her homework. Others easily distracted her and this often led to incomplete homework. Her mother was also growing tired of the constant battles that occurred when getting Tania to complete her homework as she often refused to do her homework and complained and whined a lot. She felt that Tania needed to take more responsibility for her homework by learning how to ignore distractions and manage her homework more independently.
Simon

Simon was a 10-year-old Year 6 student who completed his homework quickly but inaccurately. He also demonstrated a tendency to get easily frustrated by his homework and inevitably neglected the homework tasks he did not understand. His mother’s main concern was the presentation of Simon’s homework as she wanted to see him take more pride in his work. She felt that the quality of his homework was poor as he had a tendency to rush through his homework tasks with little precision or effort.

Sally

Sally was a 9-year-old Year 5 student who was highly motivated but lacked the time-management skills necessary to balance her family commitments and homework tasks. Sally lived with her grandmother (adopted) and spent alternative days of the weekend with her birth mother and extended family. Evidently, the emotional and physical strain caused by her family situation was affecting her ability to produce homework to her satisfaction. Her grandmother reported that she often took an unusually long time to get settled into her homework and that she regularly exhibited frustration and dissatisfaction with the quality of her work.

Measures

Homework Problem Checklist (HPC)

The HPC (Anesko, Schoiock, Ramirez, & Levine, 1987) is a checklist of 20 homework problems commonly experienced by children. It is a parent-completed checklist designed to assess the frequency with which children exhibit each of the problems identified. All items were rated as occurring ‘very often’, ‘often’, ‘at times’ or ‘never’ and received a corresponding score of 3, 2, 1, or 0 points. Items include “easily distracted by noises or
activities of others” and “whines and complains about homework”. Overall scores were
summed at the end of each day (range from 0-60), with higher scores representing more
problems exhibited by the child when engaging in homework tasks. The HPC has been widely
used to investigate children’s homework problems and has consistently demonstrated validity
and reliability (Epstein, Polloway, Foley, & Patton, 1993).

The HPC was used to measure any changes in the participants’ homework problems. It was
administered weekly throughout the duration of this study and parents were required to rate
the frequency with which their child exhibited each of the 20 homework problems on at least
three days per week. This provided valuable descriptive information on the specific
homework problems experienced by each participant, and provided the basis for intervention
strategies if necessary.

**Percentage of Homework Completed & Percentage Correct**

Teachers gave weekly homework sheets that included several homework tasks which covered
a range of curriculum areas. The percentage of homework completed and percentage correct
was recorded and calculated at the end of each week by the researcher. Incorrect and
incomplete problems were scored as incorrect. Homework tasks that included more than one
part were counted independently and added to the total number of homework tasks. For
instance, if a task consisted of two questions it was subsequently divided into two separate
parts when marked to allow for a maximum score of 2 for the particular task.

The percentage of homework tasks completed was calculated by dividing the number of
completed homework tasks by the total number of homework tasks within a sheet, and
multiplying this figure by 100. The percentage of homework that was correct was calculated
by dividing the number of correct homework tasks by the total number of homework tasks, and multiplying this by 100.

On-task Behaviour

Observations of on-task behaviour were scheduled twice weekly for each participant. Observation sessions were conducted in the participant’s regular classroom during the morning (9am – 11am). The observer sat approximately 2 to 4 m away from the participant on a raised desk to ensure that children could be directly observed and that their eyes and faces were easily seen. The observer was careful to ensure that each participant was oblivious to being observed by strategically sitting in an unobtrusive position. The class was instructed to complete in-seat academic work assigned by the teacher signifying the beginning of the observation period. During the designated morning observation sessions all students were observed during a) language, b) art, c) silent reading and d) maths.

Each participant was observed for 30 minutes, which was divided into 120 intervals of 15-s duration. Each interval allowed 10-sec of observation followed by 5-sec for recording. During each observation session, the participant’s behaviour was categorised as either ‘on-task’ or ‘off-task’. Off-task behaviour was coded if the child was playing with non-task related objects (e.g. toys, magazines), was not attending directly to the task, or had left his/her seat without permission for 5 or more seconds. If one or more of the described off-task behaviours were observed, a cross was placed in the corresponding interval on the recording sheet. If no off-task behaviours were observed, the appropriate interval was left unmarked, meaning the child was on-task during this interval. At the completion of each observation session, a percentage of on-task behaviour was calculated by dividing the number of on-task intervals by the total number of intervals and multiplying this figure by 100.
Quiz

Weekly quizzes were administered to the participants throughout the study. The quizzes were developed by the researcher and comprised general maths and language questions obtained from Year 5/6 educational resources that were adapted to a New Zealand context (refer to Appendix A). Participants were given the quiz simultaneously in a separate resource room and test conditions applied. Participants were instructed to ‘work as fast as they could’ and to ‘try their hardest to get the answers correct’. The participants had up to 15 minutes to complete the quiz, which allowed sufficient time with respect to the content of the questions and the expectation of short answers. Incorrect and incomplete problems were scored as incorrect. The percentage of correct responses was calculated by dividing the number of correct questions by the total number of questions in each quiz, and multiplying this figure by 100. The purpose of the weekly quiz was to evaluate whether any changes in homework completion and accuracy generalised to the classroom or affected academic achievement.

Experimental Design

This study was conducted using an ABCD multiple baseline design. The study was designed to provide increasing assistance as the participants progressed through the study, and successive phases were only implemented if the situation warranted additional intervention. Each participant was randomly assigned to a specific starting date during the intake interviews, with one-week intervals between each participant. During each intake interview, an outline of the study was described and consent was obtained from both the parent/s and their child if they wished to participate. In an effort to avoid potential bias when parents rated their children’s homework problems, the aims and expectations of the researcher were not discussed. Each potential intervention phase (B, C, D) lasted a maximum of three weeks.
Procedure

(A) Baseline

During baseline, the parent and child were advised to conduct homework as usual with the understanding that the researcher would be contacting them with assistance at the appropriate point in the multiple-baseline design. Parents were instructed to record the frequency of homework problems exhibited by their children on the Homework Problem Checklist on at least three days per week. Normal classroom practices were also operating (i.e. weekly homework sheets that consisted of a number of different homework tasks for each curriculum area). The observer conducted two 30-min observation sessions of each of the participants per week. Classroom behaviour was subsequently recorded as either on-task or off-task during this time. The participants also completed a weekly quiz.

(B) Resources

Following baseline, the parents were given a copy of the Triple P homework tip-sheet (refer to Appendix B) and video. No formal instruction was provided on how to implement these resources and no contingency contracts were operating during this time. The purpose of this phase was to measure how comprehensive the Triple P resources are in terms of helping parents deal with homework problems at a universal level of intervention. At the conclusion of this phase, parents were contacted to discuss their children’s progress and determine whether additional support was necessary.

(C) Parent Training and Goal-setting

Following the Triple P resources phase, parents received training and instructions on how to apply the procedures outlined in the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video in their home
environment. Parent training was conducted individually for each family and additional resources (i.e. homework routine sheet, weekly homework goals timetable) were provided to facilitate the management of homework problems. The researcher began the interview by discussing the arrangement of a suitable place for the child to complete assigned homework emphasizing the provision of adequate space and the reduction of distractions (as highlighted in the Triple P resources). Secondly, a weekly routine was devised with the researcher acting as a mediator as each family negotiated appropriate homework times that would meet the needs of everyone. After the routine was established, the researcher advised the family to display the timetable in a highly visible area (e.g. fridge). Thirdly, the researcher formulated an example of a weekly goals timetable from the upcoming week’s homework in order to demonstrate how to divide homework tasks into more specific/smaller goals. The goals outlined on the timetable were subsequently discussed and eventually each parent and child constructed a compromised weekly goals timetable. Parents were encouraged to contact the researcher in the following weeks if they needed further assistance on how to organise and negotiate appropriate homework goals. Finally, parents were encouraged to praise the efforts of their children and to ensure that they maintained appropriate proximity in order to support their children’s attempts to develop self-responsibility when completing homework and to provide adequate assistance. Once again, no contingency contracts were operating and, at the conclusion of this phase, parents were contacted to determine whether the next phase of intervention was necessary.

(D) Contingency-contracting

During this phase, another meeting with each family was conducted in order to devise an individualised contingency contract for each child. This meeting was only conducted if the parents felt they needed additional support to provide an effective reinforcement schedule.
Parents were provided with appropriate instructions for implementing the contingency contract successfully. Each week the parent and child negotiated contracts that specified weekly rewards for achieving the elected amount of predetermined goals in accordance with the weekly goals timetable. Parents were instructed to identify a number of rewards that the child could choose from (e.g. extra television time, stay up later, have a friend to stay). Rewards were provided once the child had successfully achieved the number of specified goals outlined in their weekly goals timetable (e.g. the child had to complete all four homework goals during the week in order to receive their reward). Parents were encouraged to include their child in the contracting process as a means of providing opportunities to discuss appropriate rewards and helping each child assume more responsibility for selecting goals, which would consequently increase the child’s motivation to complete homework tasks.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

Homework Problem Checklist (HPC)

Figure 1 presents the HPC scores for each of the five participants. Results show that all of the participants demonstrated a reduction in homework problems throughout the duration of this study.

During the initial four weeks of the study, Ann scored an average of 10-15 homework problems. During the parent training/goal-setting phase whereby a routine was established Ann demonstrated a notable improvement in her HPC scores as they decreased to an average of 2 homework problems per week. During the final phase where contingency contracts were operating, Ann’s homework problems were eliminated resulting in the termination of her participation in this study.

During baseline Joe averaged 30 homework problems per week. The introduction of the Triple P homework resources during the resources phase resulted in a decrease in Joe’s HPC scores from an average of 30 problems to 19 problems per week. With the addition of parent training/goal-setting procedures, Joe demonstrated a further reduction of homework problems as his HPC scores decreased to an average of 11 problems per week. Following the first week of the contingency-contracting phase Joe’s mother was satisfied with the improvements Joe had made and subsequently decided to withdraw him from the study. Overall Joe’s HPC scores decreased from a mean of 30 problems to 8 problems per week.
Figure 1: Homework Problem Checklist scores during baseline and intervention phases across participants. Week 6 represents a return to school following a two-week holiday break.
Tania experienced an average of 30 homework problems per week during the initial phase of this study. With the introduction of the Triple P homework resources her HPC score decreased slightly to an average of 22 homework problems per week. During the final two phases whereby goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures were implemented Tania’s homework problems gradually decreased from an average of 18 to 15 homework problems. Overall, Tania’s HPC scores represent a gradual decrease in homework problems from an average of 30 problems to 15 problems as the implementation of support increased.

During baseline, Simon averaged 27 homework problems per week and by the final phase his score remained relatively high, as he continued to experience a mean of 22 homework problems per week. During Weeks 8 and 9 Simon was sick and no data was obtained.

Sally’s HPC scores were minimal to begin with as she averaged 4 homework problems per week during baseline. During the resources and parent training/goal-setting phase Sally experienced an average of 5 and 4 homework problems per week respectively. Following a mean score of just 2 homework problems per week during the parent training/goal-setting phase Sally’s grandmother decided to withdraw Sally from the study because she was happy with her progress. The contingency contract was developed by Sally’s grandmother during this phase without direct training on how to devise a contingency contract. Sally’s grandmother independently designed a reinforcement contingency that was integrated into Sally’s weekly goals timetable. It was designed so that if Sally achieved four out of her five predetermined weekly goals then she was allowed to go to the markets on Sunday, but if she did not achieve this requirement she was not allowed to go. The contract also specified that the reward would be provided on a weekly basis therefore it was possible for Sally to go to the markets each Sunday if she achieved four of her five homework goals.
Percentage of Homework Completed

Treatment effects were also demonstrated in the homework completion scores for all five participants as presented in Figure 2. Three participants exhibited clear improvements in homework productivity following the implementation of the Triple P homework resources alone, while the final two participants showed varying results in their homework completion levels.

Ann completed an average of 60% of her homework during baseline. During the resources phase when the Triple P homework resources were provided Ann’s percentage increased markedly to an average of 93% per week. During the final two phases Ann maintained a high homework completion average of 95% per week.

During baseline Joe completed an average of 49% of his homework per week. Once the Triple P homework resources were introduced, Joe’s homework completion levels improved markedly to a mean of 93% completion per week. During the final four weeks of his participation in this study Joe maintained a mean homework completion rate of 89%.

Tania completed an average of 61% of her homework during baseline. Following the implementation of the Triple P homework resources Tania’s completion levels increased slightly before dropping again during Week 6, which coincided with the return to school following a two-week holiday period. During the parent training/goal-setting phase, Tania’s homework completion levels increased slightly to an average of 72% per week. Once a contingency contract was implemented during the final phase Tania’s levels again increased slightly to an average of 86%. The contingency contract was designed to allow Tania to gain
Figure 2: Percentage of homework completed during baseline and intervention phases across participants. Week 6 represents a return to school following a two-week holiday break.
access to activities, such as extra TV time or have a friend to stay on the weekend if she achieved four of her five predetermined homework goals during the week. Overall Tania’s homework completion levels increased from a mean of 61% during baseline to 86% in the final phase.

During baseline, Simon had a mean homework completion rate of 64%, however his weekly scores during this time were highly variable as shown in Figure 2. With the introduction of the Triple P homework resources, Simon’s homework completion levels dropped slightly to an average of 61% per week. During the parent training/goal-setting phase Simon was unwell for two weeks, however once the goal-setting procedures were implemented during the final week of this phase (and the contingency-contracting procedure which was introduced a week later) Simon’s completion levels improved to an average of 95% per week. The contingency contract was developed on the basis of providing Simon with rewards, such as extra pocket money if he achieved the predetermined number of weekly goals previously negotiated. Simon’s goals were designed to focus on improving the quality of his homework.

During baseline, Sally completed an average of 88% of her homework per week. The implementation of the Triple P homework resources appeared to result in an additional improvement in Sally’s homework completion levels to 100% correct per week during this phase. During the parent training/goal-setting phase, minimal training was actually required as the reward system and routine established during the previous phase appeared to be operating effectively and Sally maintained a score of 100% correct during the final three weeks of her involvement in this study.
Percentage of Homework Correct

Percentage of homework correct for each of the five participants is presented in Figure 3. Results show that all five participants demonstrated an improvement in homework accuracy levels throughout the duration of this study.

Once again, Ann’s accuracy levels gradually increased over the duration of the study. During baseline Ann completed 56% of her homework correctly and by the final phase she was completing an average of 91% accurately.

Joe’s percentage of homework correct also increased in relation to the improvements demonstrated in his homework completion levels. Once again, a significant increase in Joe’s homework accuracy was recorded following the introduction of the Triple P homework resources, as his accuracy score increased from an average of 40% correct to 84% correct. During the parent training/goal-setting phase, Joe’s accuracy scores were quite variable and he demonstrated a mean score of 88%. During the final week of Joe’s participation in this study he completed 97% of his homework correctly.

Tania’s accuracy levels throughout the study demonstrate a gradual improvement over time. During baseline she averaged an accuracy rate of 63%. Following the introduction of the Triple P homework resources, her homework accuracy score increased slightly to 71% during Week 5, however after the return to school during Week 6 Tania’s accuracy score fell to 43% of homework completed correctly. During the parent training/goal-setting phase, Tania averaged an accuracy score of 63% and she continued to make improvements during the final phase when her accuracy levels reached an average of 84% correct per week.
Figure 3: Percentage of homework completed correctly during baseline and intervention phases across participants. Week 6 represents a return to school following a two-week break.
Simon’s accuracy levels fluctuated during the initial two phases where he averaged an accuracy score of 44% during baseline and 53% correct during the resources phase. During the final four weeks, after parent training on how to implement goal-setting procedures and contingency contracts had been conducted, Simon’s homework accuracy levels improved and he maintained relatively high accuracy scores that ranged from 77% to 92%.

During baseline, Sally’s accuracy levels gradually declined in a similar pattern to the results recorded for her homework completion levels. Once again, with the introduction of the Triple P homework resources, Sally demonstrated an immediate improvement in her accuracy scores, as she averaged 97% correct during the resources and parent training/goal-setting phases.

**On-task Behaviour**

Levels of on-task behaviour for all five participants are displayed in Figure 4. Results show that improvements in on-task behaviour in the classroom were demonstrated by four of the five participants.

Ann maintained a relatively high level of on-task behaviour throughout the duration of this study, with a slight increase in her weekly means as time progressed. During baseline Ann averaged 80% of time spent on-task and this score decreased a little to a mean of 73% during the following phase. Ann’s accuracy score increased an average of 89% during the parent training/goal-setting phase and this score was maintained during the final phase whereby Ann had a mean on-task score of 94% during the final weeks of her participation in this study.
Figure 4: Percentage of intervals of on task behaviour during baseline and intervention phases across participants. Week 6 represents a return to school following a two-week break.
Joe was also on-task for a mean of 80% of intervals during baseline. This level dropped slightly to an average of 76% of intervals during the resources phase before gradually increasing to a mean of 88% during the parent training/goal-setting phase. During the final week of his participation in this study when a contingency contract was operating, Joe’s on-task behaviour increased to an average of 96%.

During baseline Tania was on-task for an average of 39% of intervals. This level subsequently increased to 52% during the resources phase. During the parent training/goal-setting phase Tania’s levels of on-task behaviour improved to an average of 72% of intervals engaged in on-task behaviour and she continued to maintain an average of 72% of intervals spent on-task during the final phase. Overall Tania’s on-task scores represent a significant improvement from an average of 39% to 72% of intervals spent on-task.

Simon’s on-task behaviour throughout this study was quite variable and showed no conclusive treatment effects. For instance, Simon averaged an on-task level of 40% during baseline before demonstrating a significant improvement during the resources phase to an average of 59% of intervals spent on-task. However, Simon’s on-tasks scores dropped to an average of 51% during the final phase.

During baseline Sally averaged 60% of intervals spent engaging in class work. During the resources phase, Sally’s on-task behaviour improved markedly to a mean of 78%. Subsequently Sally maintained high levels of on-task behaviour during the final phase averaging 86% of intervals spent engaging in class work.
Quiz Scores

Figure 5 represents the quiz scores for all five participants. Results show that all of the participants demonstrated a gradual improvement on their weekly quiz scores as time progressed.

Ann achieved a quiz score of 66% during baseline. This score gradually increased over time, as her average scores during the resources and parent training/goal-setting phase were 71% and 78% respectively. During the final phase Ann’s quiz scores improved as she maintained a high quiz score average of 87%.

Joe scored an average of 70% on his weekly quizzes during baseline. With the introduction of the Triple P homework resources, Joe’s quiz scores improved slightly to 74%, while the most significant improvement was recorded during the parent training/goal-setting phase when his quiz scores averaged 93%. This score was subsequently maintained during the final week of Joe’s participation in this study when he scored 92% on his final quiz.

Tania’s mean quiz score was 30% during the initial phase of this study. However this average increased to 56% during the resources phase. With the addition of parent training/goal-setting procedures, Tania maintained an average of 54% on her quiz scores before demonstrating a slight improvement to a mean of 61% during the final phase.

During the baseline and resources phases Simon produced low quiz scores of 18% and 29% respectively. However, following Simon’s return to school after illness during the parent training/goal-setting phase his quiz scores increased markedly to an average of 54% during
Figure 5: Quiz score percentages during baseline and intervention phases across participants. Week 6 represents a return to school following a two-week break.
the final four weeks of this study. Overall Simon’s quiz scores increased from a mean of 18% during baseline to 58% during the contingency-contracting phase.

Sally’s quiz scores were quite variable throughout the duration of the study, however her scores did show a slight increase as time progressed. During baseline she averaged 69% with one exceptionally high score of 93% achieved in the first week. During the resources and parent training/goal-setting phase Sally’s mean quiz scores improved slightly where she scored 74% and 89% respectively.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

The present study evaluated the effectiveness of the Triple P homework tip-sheet and video by measuring changes in participant’s homework problems, levels of accuracy and homework completion, academic achievement, and classroom behaviour. Goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures were also investigated in response to parents’ requests for additional support throughout the study. Results support much of the research that has shown homework to play an important role in improving basic skills and increasing academic achievement for primary school children (Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson, & Andrews, 1994). For instance, results from this study demonstrate that the development of self-responsibility for completing homework tasks:

i) improved parents’ ratings of homework problems,

ii) improved homework completion and accuracy,

iii) improved academic achievement, and

iv) improved on-task behaviour for most of the participants.

Homework completion and accuracy results show that all five participants acquired more effective study habits and assumed more responsibility for their homework. In hindsight, this is a crucial finding considering the research demonstrating that homework completion is one of the most important factors associated with academic achievement (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). For instance, the introduction of new skills presented in class can be reinforced by additional practice at home, increasing the likelihood of improvements in children’s academic performance (Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson, & Andrews, 1994). It also provides valuable support for the effectiveness of the Triple P homework resources, as all five
participants demonstrated improvements in homework productivity following the implementation of the strategies outlined in these resources.

Improvements in on-task behaviour in the classroom were demonstrated by four of the five participants. In most instances, the participants maintained high percentages of on-task behaviour during the final two phases suggesting that they had acquired new study skills that had been subsequently generalised to their engagement in class work. Results suggest that as the participants’ levels of homework completion increased so did their on-task behaviour. These results partially support the notion that a positive correlation exists between time on-task and learning (Jenson, Sheridan, Olympia & Andrews, 1994), as time spent on homework tasks improves students study habits and attitudes towards schoolwork (Gajria & Salend, 1995).

The hypothesis that the Triple P homework resources would reduce homework problems and improve homework production as a function of the effective implementation of these strategies was also supported. Increases in assistance throughout the study resulted in subsequent improvements in the participants’ scores. Results show that the use of the Triple P homework resources, and the subsequent implementation of goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures, offers a positive and manageable intervention in terms of providing parents with realistic strategies designed to help them manage their children’s homework problems.

Ann Ann’s results throughout the duration of this study were very encouraging in relation to the improvements in her homework productivity, and reductions in the homework problems she
experienced. The construction of a negotiated routine facilitated Ann’s ability to complete her homework while simultaneously juggling her sporting commitments that had increased to three hours of training three days a week during the second half of this study. This routine helped Ann manage her homework more effectively as her completion levels increased by an average of 33% following the implementation of the Triple P homework resources. In addition, Ann’s mother commented that Ann had shown a greater commitment to completing her homework independently and more responsibility by modifying her weekly routine to allow for changes in her sporting timetable. Interestingly, Ann’s results show that as her motivation to complete her homework improved so did her commitment to produce quality homework as Ann’s completion and accuracy scores were identical on four weekly records during the final five weeks of this study. This demonstrates that when Ann completed her homework, she completed it correctly.

With reference to Ann’s behaviour in the classroom, results show that Ann’s levels of on-task behaviour were relatively high prior to the inclusion of any intervention and Ann’s mother mentioned that Ann’s discipline and respect towards authority had never been a problem in terms of managing her behaviour at school. Ann’s mother also reported that the discipline learnt through the expectations associated with her sport might have coincidently generalised to the way she behaved at school.

Finally, Ann demonstrated high percentages on her weekly quizzes during the final weeks of her involvement in this study, supporting the notion that improvements in homework completion and accuracy seem to have a positive effect on children’s academic achievement. Current research has demonstrated that homework can have a positive impact on children’s acquisition of basic skills (Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson & Andrews, 1994), as learning is
internalised through engagement in homework tasks. For instance, as Ann demonstrated an improvement in her homework completion and accuracy levels, these improvements coincide with improvements she recorded in her quiz scores. This suggests that homework completion and accuracy levels had generalised to their academic achievement, and that these improvements could be attributed to the additional learning taking place due to the development of understanding and retention of knowledge acquired from completing their homework tasks. These results are consistent with existing research that has consistently shown that time spent on homework tasks is associated with improved academic functioning at school (Keith & Page, 1985).

Joe

Joe’s results were also promising throughout this study, and Joe was subsequently withdrawn from the study early owing to parental satisfaction with the reductions in his homework problems and increased self-responsibility. Evidently, the introduction of the Triple P homework resources alone had a positive impact on the number of homework problems he experienced, highlighting the effectiveness of the strategies outlined in these resources. Joe’s mother reported that Joe had finally realised the importance of doing his homework as the video reinforced her attempts to explain to Joe the need for good study habits. After establishing a weekly routine and providing continual encouragement when Joe initiated his homework tasks independently, Joe’s mother could genuinely notice a positive shift in his attitude towards homework.

Similarly, Joe also showed a huge improvement in the amount of homework he completed, and the quality of his homework as shown by his accuracy levels following the introduction of the Triple homework resources. Interestingly, the changes in Joe’s attitude appeared to be
relatively permanent as he maintained high completion levels during the final stages of this study, suggesting the Joe had not only thought about the importance of completing his homework but he had made a conscious effort to improve his study skills.

It seems that the reported positive change in Joe's attitude towards his homework during the resources phase may have generalised to his approach to class work as shown by his high levels of on-task behaviour during the later half of the study. His realisation of the importance of homework and the need for effective study habits may have subsequently influenced his motivation to engage in both homework and class work more frequently and voluntarily.

Joe’s quiz scores were also very high during the final weeks of his involvement in this study suggesting, once again, that improvements in homework productivity seems to have a positive effect on academic achievement in the classroom (Olympia, Sheridan, Jenson & Andrews, 1994).

Tania

Tania’s results show gradual improvements in homework productivity and academic achievement, and a gradual reduction in homework problems she experienced throughout this study. Tania’s HPC scores gradually declined, and interestingly her HPC scores began to decrease during baseline. Although Tania’s HPC scores decreased from an average of 30 to 15 homework problems per week, limitations in relation to the short experimental phases may have hindered Tania's progress. Additional time may have given Tania more time to adjust to the changes being implemented within each phase.
Tania’s homework productivity also improved slightly as time progressed, however following the return to school after a two-week break during Week 6, both her completion levels and accuracy scores dropped markedly. Results suggest that the return to school after the holidays may have interfered with her homework performance during this time, as the previously formulated routine would have had little time to become firmly established before this break. In addition, Tania’s dissatisfaction with the initial routine that was developed during the resources phase may also explain why she demonstrated minimal improvements during this time. During our meeting prior to the commencement of the parent training/goal setting phase, a more practical routine was negotiated in order to meet the needs of both Tania and her mother. Tania wanted a routine that allowed her to complete her homework later in the evening, which coincidently, eliminated many of the distractions caused by Tania’s siblings. Evidently, Tania’s homework completion and accuracy levels gradually improved following the development of this more effective routine, and the subsequent implementation of a contingency contract during the final phase. Tania’s mother reported that Tania was actually initiating her homework independently, and she was genuinely trying a lot harder in terms of the quality of her homework.

Tania’s on-task behaviour during the initial two phases of this study were relatively low. These low scores appear to have been due to her inability to ignore distractions at school. Tania’s problems with distractibility were one of the main concerns her mother expressed when trying to get Tania to complete her homework. Once a new routine was established and strategies to help Tania ignore distractions at home were discussed she demonstrated improvements in her on-task behaviour at school. This suggests that the strategies discussed during this phase were being generalised to the classroom. Interestingly Tania continued to
maintain a high on-task level during the final phase suggesting that she was continuing to use these strategies in an effort to manage any distractions at school.

Finally, Tania’s quiz scores also improved as time progressed. It seems that improvements in homework completion and accuracy levels gradually affected Tania’s academic achievement as evident by higher scores demonstrated during the final phase. Interestingly, both Joe and Tania’s results suggest that the benefits associated with completing homework had a delayed effect on their academic achievement, as improvements in their quiz scores were recorded approximately three weeks after initial improvements were observed in their homework completion and accuracy levels.

Simon

Simon’s results were variable across all five measures investigated in this study. Throughout the duration of this study Simon’s HPC score showed minimal improvements, as shown in Figure 1. Illness during the parent training/goal-setting phase meant that Simon’s mother did not receive any direct training until the final week of this phase. This highlights another limitation pertaining to such short phases, and the time constraints associated with conducting a study towards the end of the school year. These limitations unfortunately seemed to have interfered with the opportunity to allow for extra weeks in order to implement the goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures separately, which may have resulted in additional improvements in Simon’s HPC scores.

Simon’s homework completion levels and accuracy scores fluctuated during the initial two phases making it hard to draw any valid conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the interventions implemented. Simon’s mother reported that Simon’s homework productivity
appeared to vary in accordance with his understanding of homework tasks, and that his homework scores were more a function of his interest in the curriculum content, rather than any intervention she implemented. This may explain why the implementation of a routine during the resources phase had little effect on his motivation to complete his homework. However, during the contingency-contracting phase, Simon’s homework completion and accuracy levels improved markedly as rewards (i.e. extra pocket money) were introduced to overcome the lack of control the routine was maintaining during the previous phase. These rewards also provided additional reinforcement for Simon’s efforts as praise was not substantial enough to motivate him to complete homework tasks. Simon’s mother also reported that if his motivation did begin to deteriorate a more desirable reinforcer was introduced into the weekly goals timetable constructed during the following week in an effort to maintain his motivation. Interestingly, during the final few weeks of this study when Simon’s homework productivity scores improved, Simon’s mother reported that he seemed to be enjoying his homework more.

Simon’s levels of on-task behaviour were also highly variable throughout the duration of this study. Interestingly, Simon’s higher levels of on-task behaviour were recorded when participating in art and language tasks, while his lowest levels were observed during reading sessions. It seems likely that Simon’s on-task behaviour was a function of the curriculum tasks assigned rather than any intrinsic desire to engage in all of his class work regardless of the topic. In hindsight, this highlights another limitation of this study as observation sessions were only conducted between 9-11am each morning and this limited coverage of the curriculum areas in which the participants were observed.
In an attempt to understand the minimal changes in Simon’s on-task behaviour one hypothesis is that the intervention did not target his main homework problem. For instance the focus of Simon’s intervention was to improve the quality if his homework rather than his problem with understanding the content. The intervention aimed at helping Simon overcome his obvious performance deficit by focusing on improving the quality of his homework, rather than targeting his apparent deficit pertaining to his inability to understand the content of homework tasks.

By providing Simon with practical suggestions on how to manage his homework, such as teaching him how to break his homework into smaller more understandable tasks, Simon might have been able to develop skills that would have been more beneficial for him in terms of helping him cope with his class work. Consequently, Simon may have spent more time engaged in class work resulting in higher levels of on-task behaviour. This highlights the importance of implementing interventions that are carefully designed to target specific homework problems.

Unfortunately, due to time restrictions associated with this study and illness during the third phase, the full extent of Simon’s problems in understanding content was not clearly identified until the final few weeks of this study. However, provisions were made following the completion of this study to support his parents while implementing subsequent interventions to help Simon understand and manage his class work more effectively. Although improvements were made in terms of Simon’s homework productivity during this time, it would be interesting to evaluate Simon’s progress on both the HPC and on-task behaviour following this finding, as it is easy to understand why these scores showed little or no change throughout this study.
Finally, Simon’s quiz scores were very low and coincidently reflect his attitude towards having to complete the weekly quizzes, as he was unhappy about having to leave the classroom to do the quiz because he felt singled-out. As a result, he tended to rush the quizzes and left many of the questions unanswered making it hard to obtain an accurate measure of this aspect of his performance. Interestingly, one of his mother’s main concerns was his lack of commitment to completing quality homework as he always rushed his tasks and this resulted in messy and incomplete homework. On Simon’s return to school following illness, his scores improved markedly and his attitude regarding the completion of the weekly quizzes had improved, as he seemed to take more care and time when working out his answers. This positive shift in Simon’s attitude coincides with the improvement recorded for his homework completion and accuracy levels, suggesting he had also changed the manner in which he engaged in his homework tasks.

Improvements in Simon’s completion levels and accuracy scores during the final four weeks of this study suggest that he had developed better study habits in terms of producing quality homework by actually taking sufficient time required to complete tasks accurately. Results suggest that this behaviour had generalised to his improved attitude towards the completion of the weekly quizzes, which subsequently resulted in marked improvements in his weekly quiz scores.

Sally

Sally’s results throughout this study were also very encouraging as she exhibited clear improvements in all five measures investigated, resulting in her early withdrawal from this study due to parental satisfaction.
Sally maintained a relatively low number of homework problems during the study. However the implementation of a parent-initiated contingency contract during the parent training/goal-setting phase provided the final bit of motivation Sally needed to overcome the few homework problems she was experiencing with regards to her dissatisfaction with her homework, which resulted in her taking an unusually long amount of time to complete her homework tasks.

Sally’s homework productivity levels were also impressive as she demonstrated notable improvements in her homework completion and accuracy levels during the latter half of her involvement in this study. Remarkably, Sally’s completion levels reached a ceiling effect during the resources phase as she completed 100% of her homework during the final 6 weeks of this study. She also completed 100% of her homework correctly during the final 3 weeks of her involvement in this study.

Finally, Sally’s on-task behaviour and quiz scores throughout this study showed notable improvements as she maintained high levels of on-task behaviour during the final phase as well as scoring highly on the weekly quizzes during this time. Overall Sally’s results represent a dramatic improvement on all measures as time progressed and Sally began to acquire better study skills.

Additional Benefits of the Intervention

As previously discussed, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Triple P homework resources in terms of helping parents eliminate their children’s homework problems. Furthermore, participation in this study provided parents with a basic collection of
behaviour management skills, as the strategies outlined in these resources are fundamentally based on social learning principles (Sanders, 1999). They are designed so that parents can modify and subsequently generalise these skills to manage other behaviour problems their children may experience. For instance, the use of reward systems can be implemented to help parents to manage other problems, such as getting their child to complete everyday chores.

The parents in this study reported that the strategies outlined by Triple P homework resources were very useful and easy to implement, therefore increasing the likelihood that they would use these strategies in the future. They also reported feeling more confident in applying the various techniques and noticed they were a lot calmer when helping their children complete their homework because of the knowledge they had acquired from the suggestions outlined in these resources. In addition, the parents commented that being introduced to the research which supported existing strategies that they had been previously using gave them more confidence when using these procedures. This justification of their methods also provided them with a renewed confidence in their parenting skills.

The use of goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures also required the participants to monitor their own behaviour, resulting in the development of self-responsibility and effective negotiation skills. For instance, the participants learnt how to negotiate homework routines/goals, monitor their performance in relation to achieving their goals, and subsequently experience the consequences of their behaviour. Ultimately, these are essential everyday skills that can be generalised to other settings and situations.

Another benefit associated with this study was the development of healthier parent-child relationships. Some parents reported that they had experienced more positive interactions with
their child when engaging in homework tasks. Initial complaints relating to unnecessary conflict and stress caused by homework had been reduced and parents were happy to report the positive changes they had noticed in their children's attitudes towards completing homework. Some of these changes included having their child sit at the table without being told, bringing books home from school to complete homework tasks without prompting, moving to a different room if it got too noisy where they were working, not leaving homework to the last minute, and most importantly parents were happy to report that their children seemed more satisfied with their homework.

In addition, the parents reported that the use of negotiation skills during the formulation of weekly routines and goals seemed to be contributing to the improvement in their relationship, as conflict associated with constant struggles pertaining to homework completion had been reduced.

*Homework Content*

There are many characteristics relating to homework that can affect children's willingness to complete homework tasks. In reference to this study, the most notable factor contributing to children's resistance was the relevance of homework content.

Parents and children both reported feeling frustrated by homework tasks that were provided in the form of photocopied handouts that had no relevance to the content being covered in class. Homework seemed to fulfil the teacher's responsibility to give homework rather than having any beneficial effects for the children's learning. For instance, most of the homework tasks were particularly novel and had little relevance in terms of reinforcing the children's prior learning, which subsequently resulted in the development of resistance to completing these
tasks. Research that has investigated the components of homework effectiveness has consistently reported the importance of establishing clear connections between class work and what is expected at home (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998; Jenson, Sheridan, Olympia & Andrews, 1994). Content should always be related to what is being studied in class, as clarity of purpose is critical for helping parents and children understand the link between class work and homework tasks (Epstein, Polloway, Foley & Patton, 93).

In addition, parents felt that some of the tasks included in these homework sheets were more a test of their resources rather than their child’s ability to complete them. Given the social pressure put on parents in relation to the importance of their role in improving their children’s educational outcomes it is easy to understand why parents get frustrated when their children’s ability to complete homework tasks is determined by their input. Furthermore, some of the parents also developed feelings of inadequacy when struggling to facilitate their children’s learning to a level they desired because of the content of the children’s homework tasks.

This highlights an important implication for teachers in terms of ensuring that they provide homework that reinforces and maintains new skills/concepts taught in class. If children are introduced to the content in class, they are provided with an initial understanding of new knowledge and can subsequently practice the new skills at home with minimal parental involvement. Ideally parents should be seen as a resource whereby they provide encouragement and assistance when necessary (Sanders, 1992), rather than being expected to know the answers. As a result, parents would feel more satisfied with their contributions when helping their children complete their homework tasks.
In conclusion, it is important to note that most of the homework given to the participants in this study was based on classroom content. These concerns were only expressed following the few weeks whereby these photocopied homework sheets were distributed, which may explain why these concerns had minimal effects on the results of this study. One obvious dilemma associated with the need to provide relevant homework is the demand on the teacher’s time (Epstein, Polloway, Foley & Patton, 1993). Given the huge workloads which most teachers must manage in the classroom, it is understandable that the added responsibility of preparing quality homework that is clear and meaningful is jeopardised. This highlights the need for educational resources that accompany standard curriculum documents so homework is not solely the teacher’s responsibility, and that problems associated with the relevance of homework content can be eliminated.

Research Limitations

The present study could have been strengthened in a number of ways. Firstly, more time should have been allocated for each experimental phase. Although results obtained from this study were promising, the participant’s progress may have been just as successful without the provision of additional support if they were given more time to adjust to the new routines and strategies that were implemented. As a result, it is hard to clearly determine the effectiveness of each intervention in isolation when considering the carry-over effects that occurred due to the increasing assistance design whereby subsequent phases built on the strategies used in the preceding phase.

Furthermore, unavoidable events such as school holidays and illness interfered with the research plans. Results demonstrate a drop in the homework completion and accuracy scores for three of the participants following the two-week break. This highlights an interesting
implication for teachers when considering the content of homework tasks following school holidays, as it appears children take a week or so to readjust to their school routine.

In addition, illness experienced by one participant (Simon) during this third phase emphasises the need for additional time within phases. Unfortunately, in Simon's case, goal-setting and contingency-contracting procedures were introduced within a week of each other making it hard to determine the effects of each treatment. In retrospect, it is not surprising that Simon demonstrated improvements during the final four weeks of this study considering the intensity of the intervention implemented.

This study would have also been strengthened if follow-up data were obtained. This would have provided valuable data in relation to the maintenance of the participant's improvement, as well as any subsequent changes that may have occurred for the two participants who had not reached optimum levels of performance during the time that the study was operating. In addition, follow-up data would also provide information relating to the presence of any potential threats to the internal and external validity of this study.

Finally this study would have been strengthened if reliability measures were obtained and the absence of inter-reliability scores suggests that the results should be interpreted cautiously. However, three of the five measures had some degree of reliability in that the teacher provided a basis for comparison when marking the participant's homework and quiz scores. For instance, both the teacher and researcher marked homework completion and accuracy levels independently. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to compare scores and gather reliability data in respect to the scores obtained from their weekly homework tasks. The participants' quiz scores also provided an element of reliability as they were constructed
from the participant’s homework and classroom content. Therefore the teacher once again
acted as a reliability check to which the researcher could compare aspects of scoring and
obtain a reliability measure in terms of the marking of class work and homework tasks.

One obvious threat to the internal validity of this study was the possibility of expectancy
effects. For instance, parent’s expectations regarding reductions in homework problems could
have resulted in potential bias when rating their children’s behaviour on the Homework
Problem Checklist. However, in an effort to avoid this, parents were informed of the
importance of early identification of homework problems in terms of increasing the
possibility of making positive changes. They were also reminded of the need for accurate
reporting in terms of helping them identify homework problems that would serve as a basis
for subsequent intervention. Therefore, parents were aware that inaccurate reporting of
homework problems would only minimise the effectiveness of any intervention implemented.

In an attempt to eliminate the participants’ expectancy effects, the children were unaware of
the full extent of the aims and expectations of this study. They also received no feedback on
their performance on any of the measures throughout the study, so it seems that the
improvements demonstrated by these participants were more a function of the intervention
than any intrinsic desire to conform to pre-existing expectations in relation to this study.

Overall, it seems that the internal validity of this study was maintained, as results show that
all participants produced fairly consistent improvements on most measures. In addition, the
presence of expectancy effects would have been made obvious by a lack of improvement in
the participant’s on-task behaviour and quiz scores when reductions in homework problems
were being reported. For instance, if all five participants showed minimal improvements in
the measures obtained from school but reductions were being recorded in their HPC scores, this would suggest the possibility of expectancy effects due to the discrepancy found in the children’s behaviour between settings. However, this was not the case as improvements on these measures coincide with the reductions found in the HPC scores for most of the participants.

The main concern regarding the external validity of this study was the lack of generality due to the small sample size. Results should be interpreted conservatively as they may not generalise to the wider population, and in particular, to children who experience other serious behaviour problems as they were excluded from this study. In saying this, it is important to realise that this matter was not the focus of the present study, as it was designed to provide preliminary research on the effectiveness of the Triple P homework resources. Therefore, this highlights the need for future research on the effectiveness of the Triple P homework resources for children with other serious behaviour problems or learning disabilities.

The final limitation of this study relates to the selection criteria used. In particular, one participant (Sally) demonstrated very low HPC scores during baseline highlighting the need for a homework problem checklist cut off point incorporated into the criteria when participants were selected. However, positive changes were demonstrated on all other measures, as Sally maintained relatively high scores for homework completion, accuracy, on-task behaviour and quiz scores during the final six weeks of her participation in this study. This suggests that the simple implementation of an intervention that focused directly on the few problems that Sally was experiencing resulted in improvements in other areas of her academic functioning. Interestingly, Sally’s initial improvements occurred following the introduction of Triple P homework resources alone. This highlights the effectiveness of the
resource in helping parents focus on their children’s homework problems and subsequently developing effective interventions to manage them without the need for professional assistance.

**Conclusion**

In light of the abundance of research emphasising the importance of engaging in homework tasks, the present study has demonstrated the effectiveness of the Triple P homework resources in helping parents manage their children’s homework problems. In addition, reductions in the participant’s homework problems resulted in the development of more positive attitudes towards their homework and improvements in other areas of their academic functioning. This study was also designed to target primary school children as changes in their study habits can be presumably made with less difficulty if homework problems are identified early (Anesko, Shoiock, Ramirez & Levine, 1987).

In retrospect, some families were successful in implementing the strategies without a great deal of training, demonstrating the usefulness of the Triple P homework resources at a universal level of intervention. The Triple P homework resources were aimed at empowering parents to take more control in relation to managing homework problems by helping them understand their responsibility with regards to:

i) providing an optimum learning environment at home by establishing a designated study area/time,

ii) providing continual encouragement and reinforcement for their children’s efforts,

iii) maintaining an appropriate proximity that supports their children’s attempts to develop self responsibility for their homework, and
iv) providing adequate assistance in response to their child’s requests for help.

In conclusion, it seems that the most influential factor associated with getting children to engage in their homework tasks is their realisation of the importance of learning effective study skills. As the children made a positive shift in the way they thought about their homework, their engagement in homework tasks improved correspondingly, suggesting that personality aspects can affect children’s homework outcomes (Jenson, Sheridan, Olympia & Andrews, 1994).

This highlights the stigma associated with homework as children view it as an extra chore by focusing on the product of having to get it done, rather than realising the importance of homework in terms of the learning process associated with it. The provision of providing homework that is fun and meaningful to children establishes a link between home and school and helps children reap the benefits associated with completing their homework. This can facilitate a positive shift in the children’s attitudes towards homework. Reinforcement procedures that are designed to reward children’s efforts can initially facilitate the development of effective study habits. However, once children begin to realise the benefits of engaging in homework tasks, the development of intrinsic motivation can eliminate the need for external reinforcement.

Future research in this area should investigate ways to facilitate the development of strategies that make homework more interesting to children so attitudes regarding homework can become more optimistic and the stress experienced by parents in relation to getting children to complete their homework can be minimised.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF A QUIZ

QUIZ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT SCORE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Who scored the most points? ______

2. Who scored the least number of points? ______

3. How many more points did Sue score than John? ______

4. Who scored 5 more points than John? ______

5. How many points were scored on Monday? ______

6. On what day were the most points scored? ______

Think about these questions:

1. A farmer collected 76 eggs. He sold 24. How many did he still have? ______

2. In Alice’s class of 24 children there are 16 girls. How many boys are there? ______

3. Tom’s class planted 3 rows of trees with 8 trees in each row. How many trees did they plant? ______

LANGUAGE

Which of the following words does not have a similar meaning to friend?

- companion
- playmate
- foe
- pal

Which of the following words does not have a similar meaning to extra?

- excess
- shortfall
- more
- additional

Which of the following words does not have a similar meaning to thought?

- reflection
- opinion
- vacancy
- view

APOSTROPHES

Put the apostrophe in the correct place and shortened each word

e.g. How is → How’s

1. Do not → ________
2. Would have → ________
3. He will → ________
4. Can not → ________
5. What is → ________

SYLLABLES

How syllables are there in these words:

1. imagine ________
2. eventually ________
3. interesting ________
4. gulp ________
5. couple _________
APPENDIX B

TRIPLE P HOMEWORK TIP-SHEET
**Homework**

Children are usually expected to spend some time out of school hours doing homework and study. Expectations vary between different schools and teachers so it is important for parents to find out what is expected of their child. Parents have an important role in helping their child develop good study habits and routines. Homework time should not be a time of stress or pressure. It should be a pleasant time when parents can provide encouragement and offer help if their child needs it. This section gives some suggestions on how to help your child develop a good homework routine.

Children differ widely in their abilities and how quickly they come to understand new ideas. However, children are more likely to work to the best of their abilities when they are provided with encouragement, support and help.

**WHY DO HOMEWORK PROBLEMS OCCUR?**

Homework problems can arise because of poor planning such as leaving things to the last minute. For example, some children make it hard on themselves by starting a large project the night before it is due.

Some children have difficulties with homework because they do not understand the work. Some avoid homework, or do it quickly with little care, because they would rather be doing something else. Parents may feel their child does not have a good attitude towards study or believe their child is lazy or irresponsible. This may make the problem worse.

**HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR HOMEWORK**

**Let Your Child**

**Relax After School**

Children need time to relax after school, just as adults do after work. Your child may also be hungry. Offer them an afternoon snack and let them tell you about their day. If your child is in after-school care, give them time to unwind when they first arrive home.

**Ask Your Child**

**About Their Homework**

Find out what your child needs to do for homework and when it
needs to be completed. It might involve tasks such as using a ruler, counting or sorting things, learning spelling words, writing sentences, working on a project or doing mathematics problems. Your child may have some homework free days if they complete all their homework tasks early in the week.

Set a Time for Doing Homework

Set a regular time for homework that fits with your family’s schedule. You may need to fit it in around your work and your child’s other commitments such as sport, clubs, music or art lessons. However, remember that it is important to get into a good study routine and homework should have a high priority.

A good time for doing homework is immediately after children have had time to relax but before they are allowed to play or watch television. If other children come around to play, ask them to come back when your child has finished their homework. Remind your child of the ground rules — Molly, when your homework is done you can play or watch television.

Arrange a Place To Do Homework

It is okay for children to do their homework in the family living area rather than in their bedroom, if they want to. However, it is best to set up a good study environment:

- Clear a space at a table.
- Make sure the room is well lit.
- Reduce distractions (although children do not need absolute quiet to work).

How to Encourage Your Child to Do Homework

Help Your Child Get Started

Prompt your child to get their work out and get started on the first task. Be prepared to sit at the table with your child but do not do their homework for them.

Praise Your Child for Working on Their Homework

Praise can help motivate your child to persist with their homework — Great! That’s five questions you’ve done already.

Wait Until Your Child Asks for Help

Give your child a chance to do the work on their own before helping them.

Help Your Child Solve Problems for Themselves

Prompt your child to solve problems themselves rather than giving the answer straight away. For example, if your child asks how to spell the word ‘garden’ without trying to spell it first, you
could say — *How do you think you spell it? Get out a piece of paper and try to spell it yourself first. Then I’ll come and have a look.* Offer praise when your child attempts the word. If they get the word right, offer further praise. If the word is wrong, rather than saying — *No, that’s wrong* — point out the letters that are correct first — *Michael, that’s nearly right. The first four letters are right. Have a look at the ending. Is it ‘en’ or ‘on’? Yes ‘en’. Excellent!*

Be careful not to overdo it. If after one prompt your child does not get the correct answer, tell them what it is. Children will become frustrated if every question they ask is met with responses such as — *Look it up in the dictionary first.*

You will find that your child is more cooperative if help is given freely, with one or two prompts.

**Show an Interest in Your Child’s Work**

When children are doing their homework, they need encouragement for correct work and for attempting the task rather than criticism for making mistakes. Show an interest and praise your child for their efforts.

Some children will ask whether their work is correct or want an opinion on how good the work is. Do not feel that you have to make sure your child’s work is perfect before they hand it in. It can be discouraging for your child if they have worked hard on a story only to have you point out all of the spelling or punctuation mistakes.
The ideas your child has expressed in their story may be very good. When checking work, say something positive about your child’s effort. If you must make corrections, only point out one or two mistakes.

If messy work is a problem, encourage your child to do rough copies of work first and a final neat copy to hand in at school.

**Encourage Desirable Behaviour**

Praise and reward your child’s efforts when they have finished doing their homework. Suggested rewards include allowing your child to watch television or play a special game.

**KEY STEPS**

- Let your child relax after school.
- Ask your child about their homework.
- Set a regular time and arrange a place to do homework.
- Help your child get started.
- Offer praise and encouragement while your child is working.
- Prompt your child to solve problems themselves.
- Show an interest and say something positive about your child’s work.
- Praise and reward your child when they have finished doing their homework.

**IF PROBLEMS PERSIST**

Here is another strategy you can try if your child continues to experience difficulties doing their homework.

- Explain to your child that they can earn points by doing their homework. Make a list of tasks your child must do, for example, bringing home their homework notebook each day (1 point), starting their homework by 4.15 p.m. without complaining (2 points) and working on their homework without interruption for at least 15 minutes (5 points).

- Tell your child that the points can be exchanged for a daily reward or a larger reward at the end of the week. Decide how many points your child must earn to get the reward and what the reward will be. For example, if your child earns 32 points by the end of the week they might receive some money towards a new game. Tell your child what they can earn if they reach the goal.

- Decide what you will do if your child does not do their homework. Do not do your child’s homework for them. Let them experience consequences at school if their homework is not finished or done properly. You may also like to apply a consequence at home. Suitable consequences involve the loss of an activity or privilege, such as
playing with friends, watching television or staying up till their usual bedtime. Tell your child what consequences will apply if they do not do their homework.

- Make a chart to keep a record of points earned. Stick the chart where it is easy for you and your child to see, such as on the refrigerator.

- Each day your child completes the tasks, put the points on their chart. Praise your child for doing their homework.

- If your child does not complete a task, do not give the points for that task for that day. Tell your child the problem and the consequence. Ignore protests or complaints. Do not debate or argue the point with your child. Simply carry out the consequence you decided on earlier. Keep to the agreement and where appropriate return the activity or privilege at the agreed time. You may need to use consequences for a number of days before your child learns to do their homework.

- When your child has reached the goal for 5 days in a row, start to phase out the rewards by making them harder to achieve until you can take down the chart. For example, only reward your child after they have reached the goal for 2 days in a row, then increase to 3 days, then a whole week.

- Continue to use consequences consistently if your child does not do their homework.

- Continue to praise your child for doing their homework.

If problems with homework persist, discuss the problem with your child’s teacher. Your child may need extra assistance in one or more subject areas. Remember that children’s learning, and how well they do at school, is strongly affected by their motivation as well as their ability. One of the best ways to encourage better motivation is to focus on your child’s successes — the things they do right rather than things they do wrong.

FOR FURTHER HELP

See the Positive Parenting booklet or the video Every Parent’s Survival Guide for more information on positive parenting strategies. If you have tried the strategies suggested in this video and booklet, and you have any questions or concerns about your child’s progress or development, seek professional advice.