

Summer 7-22-2019

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

David Vinje
qr5911gn@go.mnstate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Researchers wishing to request an accessible version of this PDF may [complete this form](#).

Recommended Citation

Vinje, David, "The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion" (2019). *Dissertations, Theses, and Projects*. 230.
<https://red.mnstate.edu/thesis/230>

This Thesis (699 registration) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at RED: a Repository of Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Projects by an authorized administrator of RED: a Repository of Digital Collections. For more information, please contact RED@mnstate.edu.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

David Vinje

Minnesota State University Moorhead

Chapter One

General Problem/Issue

The ability to complete a task is a topic that seems impossible to quantify - one that is laden with an infinite number of variables - how does a person measure one's ability to stick to and/or finish a task? The obvious answer is by observing the success or failure of meeting the desired goal, but then what? How do we quantify an individual's willingness or ability to complete an assignment? And when they have, how do we get people to continue on to the next task?

Within my own school district - as with any district in the state of Minnesota and beyond - a common topic of conversation amongst teachers lives within the realm of apathy. While exhausted teachers throw their arms into the air with cries of "they just don't care!", I approached this issue from a position of pragmatism. Rather than joining the masses of those that complain about what students won't do, I set out to explore the positive outcomes that may (and can!) become realities for students by helping them become aware of their own thinking. Does helping a student to be mindful about homework help them to complete it on time?

I am brought to this idea through observations within my own school building. When I was hired five years ago, I entered the district during a transitional time from the perspective of grading homework. The school was in year two of the "ICU" program, and was diligently working toward the elimination of student apathy. Within the ICU program, the philosophy is that no student has the ability to take a "zero" on an assignment, thus stealing the concept or reality of not completing a task. Missed/skipped/failed assignments were placed on the "ICU

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

List”, and would theoretically sit there until completed - until tomorrow or the end of time.

While this seemed to be an effective practice for specific populations - those students that would do it anyway - certain savvy students quickly learned that as long as they were okay eating lunch in an alternative room, they would quite literally never have to complete those assignments.

When reflecting on this reality, it became obvious to me that even when students were aware of a missing assignment, some were simply unwilling or unable to complete it.

As a naturally pragmatic and analytical person, I was irritated by my inability to truly pinpoint the reason that those students were unwilling or unable to complete the tasks being provided to them. Over time, I discovered that my own teaching strategies and expectations could dictate or influence what students were or were not willing to do - but only to a point. While this seems like an obvious discovery, it's important to realize that one typically cannot reach all students in the first attempt. As I tinkered and tactically modified varying learning strategies within my classroom, one thing became evident: the balance of student apathy and perception of their own ability was (and is) a driving force in the student's ability to learn. It is with this thought in mind that I sought to answer: Does a student's relationship with their own mindfulness (mindfulness / Fixed vs. Growth Mindset) influence their overall ability to complete a homework assignment (talent vs. Grit) within a 7th Grade Communications/Language Arts classroom?

Subjects and Setting

Description of Subjects

The participants in this study are 7th grade students in my classroom at a grades 6-8 middle school in central Minnesota. There were 42 students participating in the study,

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

representing a range of diverse backgrounds. Student participants come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities within the classroom. While emphasis in this study was not placed on student ethnicities, gender, free and reduced lunch status, or MCA test proficiency, I cannot emphasize enough the broad range of diversity represented in the study. Both male and female genders participated within the study, with a wide range of cognitive abilities represented. No one incapable of willful and assenting participation was forced to participate within the study. The student population studied constant from the beginning of the study until it was completed.

Selection Criteria

Participants in this study were chosen due to their daily proximity with myself, their teacher and researcher during the study. These students have been in my 7th Grade classroom since the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, so I had a preexisting relationship with them, and preexisting routines and classroom expectations. I chose to give all of my students the opportunity to participate, not knowing how many would actively “opt out” of the study. By doing so, I was also able to teach all 4 of my classes in the same way, as that is a core focus of the school in which I teach. Students were given the option to “opt out” of the study, and needed parent/guardian permission(s) to participate in the study. Additionally, utilizing the entire class roster gave me the best chance an optimal amount of data and observation, and gave me the ability to reflect on the acquired information from a variety of lenses and perspectives.

Description of the Setting

This study takes place in a 7th grade classroom at a middle school in central Minnesota. The school is interesting in that it exists in a “rural” central Minnesota community, but has a high

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

level of diversity not common in surrounding communities in the area. Students within the middle school represent a makeup of 43% white, 38% hispanic, 15% Somalian, with a small population African and Pacific Islander represented as well. The school setting is similar to other public middle schools in the state of Minnesota, and follows traditional school schedules and testing/grading procedures. A high percentage of students within the building (roughly 65%) receive free and reduced lunch. Students within the classroom have access to 1:1 technology (iPads), and are able to take their technology home with them at the end of the day.

Informed Consent.

Prior to the beginning of the study, permission was gained by the Institutional Review Board at Minnesota State University Moorhead, and from the Superintendent the school district in which I teach. All necessary protocols from the University and school district were followed, and all participants and their identities were protected.

Participant safety and confidentiality was of the utmost importance during this study, and was closely monitored by the researcher. This information was clearly communicated to the participants and their guardian(s) prior to the beginning of the study. Parents/guardians were asked to sign a consent form, and assent was asked of the students participating in the study. Student names and identities are not mentioned in the study.

Review of Literature

Metacognition is an element of the human existence that could be studied until the end of time, and still not produce all the answers. As a topic that is constantly changing, metacognition in its clearest existence is the ability to consciously think about one's thinking. For the purposes of this study, I will be examining metacognition through the lens of one's individual perception

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

of herself/himself. More specifically, I will attempt to focus on the balances between Mindfulness (Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset) and the acquisition of Talent, while exploring the ways in which they are interconnected via metacognition. All these topics will be explored in an effort to explore the relationship between mindfulness and student homework completion.

The following review of literature confirmed my initial thinking in that it is virtually impossible to avoid the concept of metacognition without addressing the concept of Mindfulness - a topic that has been not only championed but accelerated by the research of Carol S. Dweck.

Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset

For the purposes of this study, it is important to first understand and realize the prevalence and the difference in the two mindsets offered up by researcher Dweck. An individual that is seen by many as one of the premier researchers within the realm of psychology, Dweck presents two very different forms of mindsets: Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset.

According to Dweck, the growth mindset is based on the belief that everyone can change and grow through application and experience (Dweck, 2006, p.7). By adopting this style of thinking, individuals are capable of potentially achieving more than they would have had they remained trapped within their otherwise fixed mindset. Dweck argues that those within the growth mindset are capable of changing their perceptions of themselves more readily than those who adopt a fixed mindset.

The Fusion of Mindset and Effort

Unfortunately, it is not simply enough to identify the mindset that one may choose - consciously or subconsciously - to operate within. When identifying and understanding whether an individual operates under the fixed or the growth mindset, a key topic instantly appears:

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

effort. While individuals may identify themselves as having a “growth mindset”, they may not have the stamina or drive necessary to put forth the necessary amount of work, or may just flat out not care. This is apathy.

Student apathy is never going away. Representing what is quite possibly the core reason for this study’s existence, apathy can take on many forms with a variety of different individuals. When analyzing apathy, it is interesting to think: How much of an influence does the individual’s mindset have on the overall amount that can be achieved? Mueller & Dweck (1998) argue that learners with a growth mindset are more likely to adopt the perspective that learning takes time and effort. This is ultimately what teachers, bosses, and leaders of organizations are all striving to get those in close proximity with them to understand.

Dweck not only cautions of the limitations that exist for those trapped under the fixed mindset, but addresses the misconception held by many that those of extreme levels of talent or genius are “naturally talented” and do so “effortlessly.” Dweck counters this idea by stating, “People with the growth mindset, however, believe something very different. For them, even geniuses have to work hard for their achievements.” Dweck continues on to say that “...effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment” (Dweck, 2006, p. 41). However, while mindset and effort are ultimately successful character traits - highly desirable in students - it is important that one understand their contribution to talent as well.

Understanding “Talent”

In the field of education, it is virtually impossible to disregard the pressures that exist on teachers to provide growth opportunities to their students. One could argue that most teachers are at least knocking on the door of intuitively understanding the difference between fixed and

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

growth mindsets. However, Daniel Coyle, author of *The Talent Code*, would argue that mindset is not enough in the production of talent. Coyle takes a deep dive into the study of talent, and uses *The Talent Code* to analyze talent from the scientific perspective. Coyle argues that “The talent code is built on revolutionary scientific discoveries involving a neural insulator called myelin, which some neurologists now consider to be the holy grail of acquiring skill” (Covey, 2009, p.5). Understanding how to create talent is one thing, but how does one actually go about doing so?

Deep Practice and Struggle

Closely echoing the findings of Dweck, other researchers also realizes that individuals are not simply born as geniuses. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly found that, “in a qualitative study of the development of world-class pianists, neurologists, swimmers, chess players, mathematicians, and sculptors, Bloom noted that “only a few of [the 120 talented individuals in the sample] were regarded as prodigies by teachers, parents, or experts” (p. 533). Rather, accomplished individuals worked day after day, for at least 10 or 15 years, to reach the top of their fields. While some may begin of a higher intellect than others, it is important to recognize that effort is universal” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). All individuals that hope to achieve must put in a degree of effort in their endeavors. Coyle best summarizes this reality through a simple question and answer:

Q: Why is targeted mistake-focused practice so effective?

A: Because the best way to build a good circuit is to fire it, attend to mistakes, then fire it again, over and over. Struggle is not an option: it is a biological requirement (Coyle, 2009, p.34).

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

Grit

So what happens when one understands the need for a growth mindset, accepts the realities that exist within talent acquisition, and still wonders why they have not achieved at the level they require? Researchers Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly define grit as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). In essence, it is the adherence to the understanding that in order to build talent, one must supplement this desire with the ability to build stamina, while understanding that the efforts necessary are not of the short sighted kind, but rather a culmination of a past laden with a seemingly infinite number of failures. While not explicitly stated by the researchers, it is my understanding that this is possibly the intersection where metacognition meets mindfulness.

Growth Focused Assessment

As previously mentioned, an emphasis on growth vs black-and-white failures has found itself as a prevalent pillar in recent educational models. While this is not a “quick fix” or an easy way to instantly cause all students to thrive in the field of talent acquisition, it is a very successful way to shift students from a fixed to a growth mindset (Barnes & Fives, 2016). When using this literature review and the expertise offered by the researchers to guide my study, it was important to keep in mind the perspective of growth focused conversations and assessment.

From Literature to Practice

For the purposes of this study, it was imperative to allow mindset, the acquisition of talent, and grit to collaboratively coexist within the classroom. When focusing on the individual

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

student and attempting to gather how they perceive themselves from the perspective of mindfulness (growth vs. fixed mindset), it was important not to prematurely skew their thinking one way or another prior to the first homework assignment. While “mindfulness” has been a definite buzzword in recent years, it is something that can be fluid and difficult to grasp for a 12-13 year old. Carefully observing the intersection between metacognition, talent acquisition, and grit helped to offer an insight of a student’s relationship with mindfulness. When students began to identify their mindsets, it was interesting to observe how they existed and performed through the created homework assignments, and what level of stamina (grit) they were able to demonstrate throughout the study.

Statement of Hypothesis

Students that have natural ability do not always achieve at a level their teachers believe they are capable of reaching. Conversely, there are those students with limited cognitive ability that “overachieve” their perceived ability due to their own determination and hard work. With this in mind, I hypothesize that there is a direct correlation between a student’s mindfulness of their own abilities/willingness to complete an assignment to their overall rate of homework completion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to see if a student’s ability to focus on mindfulness in fact increases or maintains their ability to complete homework assignments. As this process transitioned from initial wonderings into an active review of literature concerning the topic, I have positioned myself to fuse the knowledge and the application into the action research.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

While acknowledging each step of the process of action research and how it contributes to the classroom study, this helps me to be able to efficiently and effectively observe the happenings within my classroom over the course of the study.

Definition of Terms

Mindfulness: one's ability to be mindful of what they are thinking/doing and why

Growth Mindset: the ability to believe that one can change and grow

Fixed Mindset: the belief that one cannot grow

Grit: the ability to stick to a task for an extended period of time

Homework: assignments given for completion at home

Small Group / Focus Group: a small group of 4-6 students in the classroom

Chapter Two

Research Questions

Whenever attempting to lead or motivate a group of people, it is important for the leader to understand what direction and strategies will get the most out of the group. It's an obvious statement, but not every group has a heterogeneous mixture of people. Take that one step further, and apply it to the average American middle school classroom. Within the walls of the middle school in this study, I find it challenging - and rewarding - to attempt to get the best out of the students on an individual level. Over the course of my time at this school, I have become increasingly frustrated at the level in which students complete their homework assignments. This is ultimately what brought me to the fundamental questions leading to this action research. While working in a classroom consisting of a variety of abilities and cultural realities, it is

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

important for me as the teacher to understand what motivates the student(s) on a personal level.

It is with this concept in mind that I sought to ask:

1. How much does an individual student's perception of herself/himself and the environment surrounding them influence their ability to do homework?
2. Does conscious mindfulness of the growth mindset encourage an additional amount of grit, or the ability to consistently complete homework?

Methods and Rationale

I will collect data using a variety of sources, and all will be conversational and observational in nature. All data collected for the purpose of this study will be collected within my 7th grade classroom. I will split the students in each class - at random - into small groups of 4-5 students. Since gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. are not the emphasis within this study, it will not be necessary to split the groups in a methodical way. Throughout the course of the study, students will be asked to respond to questions about mindfulness and homework completion. This will be an effective method of data collection in that it is a routine in my classroom to have small group discussions, and will not seem out of the ordinary. This will encourage students to answer openly and honestly, further augmented by the fact that I am their daily teacher with a pre-existing relationship/rapport with them.

Through the course of the study, I will ask the students to meet with their small groups twice a week. One of these meetings will take place while all small groups meet simultaneously, the other will be with me, the teacher. In the simultaneously synced small group, students will be interacting with one another and building rapport and relationships with one another. This group will act as an opportunity to encourage students to communicate with one another, and

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

hopefully give the best opportunity to garner honest discussion in the teacher-led small group.

Also, as previously mentioned, the small group process is already a practiced routine within my classroom. At the completion of each small group session I will ask students to repeat after me in saying, "I (student's name) understand that there is a homework assignment due tomorrow."

The homework assignment - and the completion - will be used as data and conversation for the second meeting of the week.

In the second meeting - the one with the teacher - students will be asked to respond to a question each week. This conversation will happen after the weekly homework assignment due date has passed, and will allow for a potential enhancement of the conversation. Open and honest discussion will be encouraged in this setting in an attempt to get feedback. As the researcher, I feel as though I have an advantage in this area as I have built rapport with the students. With this thought in mind, it will be important for me to avoid phrasing questions in a way that might alter their responses. Each week, I will ask each small group to focus on one main question. The questions are:

1. Do you think being mindful about your homework helps you do it?
2. What do you think about homework? Other thoughts?
3. When someone gives you homework, why do you do it?
4. Why do you choose to NOT do homework?
5. What do you think about homework? Other thoughts?

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

As previously stated, it will be important for me to guide the students in their conversations as they are twelve and thirteen years old, while not attempting to skew their responses in a specific direction. Since this study is qualitative in nature, I will

Schedule.

First, students will be randomly placed in a small focus group within their hour of the school day. During the week, students will meet twice a week with their small groups; once on their own (Tuesday) and once with me, the teacher (Thursday). A short homework assignment - specific to the data collection for this study - will be assigned on Wednesdays. In the small focus groups, a variety of academic topics will be covered and conversations about mindfulness will be had. In the weeks following, a variety of academic concepts will be taught as per usual routine in the classroom. Data will be collected and observations will be made for the duration of the five weeks.

Ethical Issues.

Due to the diligence and extreme measures taken to ensure that this study is ethical in nature, very few ethical issues are present. Students - and their guardians - will be given opportunities to opt out of the study, and are not being forced to participate. At no point will it be explicitly implied that participation in the study is connected to their grade or standing within Mr. Vinje's 7th Grade Communications classroom. Students may feel an implicit pressure to be a part of the group through natural pre-existing middle school peer pressure, not wanting to be left out of the study that "all" of their peers will be participating in. However, this potential issue is alleviated in that all students will effectively be participating in the groups, with some having their data recorded for the purpose of this study and others not.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

Anticipated Response.

I, the researcher, will be entirely cognizant of the realities of the process while conducting the study. It will be explicitly stated at the beginning of the experience that participation in the study is voluntary, and that individual student data will not be shared with anyone other than myself. It will be communicated with every practice opportunity, formative assessment, and summative assessment, that student identities will be removed from individual conversations, and instead will be represented by an otherwise arbitrary number. This information will be presented often in an attempt to bring assurance to those concerned within the study. If at any point in time the student or their guardian want to opt out of the study, it is within their right to do so.

It is my hope that this study shows benefit beyond the area of academic practice, and permeates into the realm of student motivation and desire as well. As this study takes place in a district that has a higher than average percentage of families that do not have the traditional family structure in the home, it is my hope that mindfulness and small group interaction can lend itself to an increased level of relationship and honesty with each student.

Chapter 3

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to see if a student's ability to focus on mindfulness in fact increases or maintains their ability to complete homework assignments. As this process transitioned from initial wonderings into an active review of literature concerning the topic, It was my hope to gain understanding as to why students do or do not do their homework, and what

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

their overall 12 and 13 year old interpretations are concerning the merits of homework and its existence.

How much does an individual student's perception of herself/himself and the environment surrounding them influence their ability to do homework?

This question may seem obvious at first reading, but I asked it in an attempt to truly understand students and their overall perception of themselves and the environment(s) surrounding them. Perception is something that is a direct contributor to one's mindfulness, as it is the brush that paints the realities surrounding oneself. In order to answer this question, it was clear to me that I needed to truly understand each student and their perception of their abilities. Before doing so, it was important for me to craft the questions that would be discussed in the small groups in a way that could give me insight into this issue. The question, "Why do you choose to NOT do homework" gave me the ability to see what things may be hindering an individual student from completing homework. The student's perceptions of their environmental realities often were the reason they were unable to complete the homework. In observing the responses in Table #1, it's easy to see that middle school students are obviously influenced by the environments that surround them.

Table #1

"Why do you choose to NOT do homework"

Student Answers

441 - I don't feel like doing it. My phone keeps me from doing homework.

442 - I can be lazy. Family problems.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

443 - I want to be with my friends. Babysitting. Chores.

444 - Sometimes I don't know what to do.

151 - You told us to do it, it was easy. I had to do it. Mom made me.

152 - I was playing catchup in other classes. I get distracted.

153 - I was doing other homework, and forgot about it.

154- I was finishing other homework. I'll do it later, I'll do it later. Run out of time. It's too late.

155 - I went to the Doctor with my mom. I don't know.

156 - Other things to do. Things more important, not boring.

Interpretation of Data

Analysis of this data provided the first “OBVIOUSLY!” epiphany moment for me when conducting the action research. When looking through the student responses, I couldn't help but notice the number of times a student responded by saying that something else (environment) had kept them from doing the assigned homework. When looking at the responses provided in Table #1, it was interesting to hear the students say things like “Other things to do. Things more important, not boring.” This shows me that students while some students are not inclined to complete their homework, they are at least capable of creating, and already have, formulated hierarchies of importance within their own construct of mindfulness. So maybe, the conversation of homework completion is less about mindfulness and more of priority?

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

Mueller & Dweck (1998) argue that learners with a growth mindset are more likely to adopt the perspective that learning takes time and effort. This perspective is great, but I found through the student responses that often times a student's environment is ultimately what keeps them from (wanting to) completing homework assignments. Students responses indicate that they either lack the support systems necessary to encourage successful completion of homework, or they have simply have an environment surrounding themselves - fabricated or pre existing - that does not lend itself to the successful completion of homework. This could be the point in which grit enters the conversation.

Upon reflecting on the data, there are some things that are worth noting. For example, multiple students provided answers as to why they choose to not complete homework, but then find themselves routinely and regularly completing every assignment in my class. Additionally, while the number of "I don't care about it" answers were alarming, they are not the scariest trend shown in my observations. The most common response provided in the conversation was that the homework either seemed too hard, or the student did not get it. This reality lends itself to the fact that either this response is used as a continuation of the age-old cop-out, or that students are truly feel as though they are unable to complete their homework due to a genuine inability to complete it.

Does conscious mindfulness of the growth mindset encourage an additional amount of grit, or the ability to consistently complete homework?

Upon entering the study, I felt as though there was already a strong link between a student's mindset and their ability to consistently complete homework. As this is the research question that ultimately became the focus of this action research study, I thought it would be

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

easier to analyze the connection between the two. On Tuesdays, one of the things I asked the students to do as a class, out loud, upon leaving my class was to repeat after me, “I (student name) know that I have a homework assignment due tomorrow.” By stating this multiple times, I was able to know for a fact that every student was at least aware of the night’s assignment. Students were made aware that the homework assignment would only take them 10-15 minutes (by design), and left the room.

When leaving the classroom on Tuesdays, students would then leave with the expectation that they would return the next day with the homework completed before class began. I recorded the results based on homework completion, and provided a sample as to what that looked like in Table #2.

According to the objective data recorded of student homework completion, there does not appear to be definite connection between mindfulness and a student’s homework completion. However, upon further analysis - and through evaluating the focus group conversations - there exists evidence to suggest that mindfulness may encourage the ability to consistently complete homework.

Table #2

Y - Student completed homework

N - Student did not complete homework

| Student | HW 1 | HW2 | HW3 | HW4 | HW5 |
|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 221 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| 222 | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| 223 | N | Y | N | Y | N |

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|--------|---|---|---|
| 224 | N | N | Y | Y | Y |
| 225 | N | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| 231 | Y | N | N | Y | N |
| 232 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| 233 | N | N | N | N | N |
| 234 | N | Absent | N | N | N |

Interpretation of Data

Upon analyzing Table #2, it becomes obvious that the data presented in the study becomes ineffective when used as the sole tool in answering this question.

The golden nugget of information within the study concerning this research question is found in the small group responses. Multiple students (33 total), responded to the question “Do you think being mindful about your homework helps you do it?” by saying some form of “yes.” One student continued on to elaborate by saying things like, “I’m not a bad kid. When I remember, I want to do my homework. It’s just that I forget about it.” While this response was articulated by a student that completes about 50% of his homework, student responses like this one were not uncommon in the study. Of the 78% of students that thought mindfulness helps to increase their homework completion, my interaction with one student may have summed my results up best. He said, “Of course mindfulness helps me, Mr. Vinje. Because then you don’t forget.” When I further pressed him and asked him if he forgot to do the homework the night before he responded by saying, “Yes.”

As previously mentioned, It’s clear to see that the objective data of the recording of actual homework completion may not lend itself to effective answering this research question.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

However, in focusing on student conversation(s), it becomes obvious to me that students feel as though mindfulness helps them in the venture of completing their homework. However, the data and conversations don't add up. This causes me to think that while mindfulness could be something that could help students complete their homework, the learning of mindfulness may be something that takes both time and practice. Additionally, one's own priorities and perspectives may keep them from wanting to develop a growth mindset.

Conclusion

While mindfulness may in fact have an effect on student homework completion, the action research within my classroom does not necessarily draw a confident link between the two, as there are too many additional factors involved. My loosely based attempts to discover if the concept of myelin creation (Covey, 2009, p.5) could be applied to students ability to create a muscle memory of mindfulness ultimately is too long of an undertaking to truly explore on such a condensed timeline. However, there are multiple things to consider at the conclusion of this action research process.

While I was facilitating a small group conversation about homework, one student profoundly stated, "Mr. Vinje, homework is like mustard. You only need a little bit to do the job." As I reflect on that statement, it causes me to instead focus on myself and my shortcomings as a teacher, and one of the questions that I asked of the students: "What do you think about homework? Other thoughts?" What do I think about this action research? There are some things I could have improved on, and would recommend that I do to further the research undertaken by this study.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

Unfortunately, I feel as though the timing of the study was limiting in multiple ways. First, the timing of the research took place in the final months of the school year, a time typically reserved for standardized testing and multiple interruptions. While the study still worked out to its completion, it would have been interesting to see how the study would have changed if it were administered PRIOR to the standardized tests being taken. In addition to timing being an issue, I feel as though the grading policy within the school district may have affected the study. As we have multiple tiered assignments (practice, formative, summative) all carrying specific weights and expectations, the fact that the majority of the homework assignments had to fall under “practice” could have kept some students from completing the assignments.

In hindsight, I wish I would have included a survey at the very beginning of the study. When I had originally designed a variation of the study primarily focusing on the quantitative side of homework completion, there was no need for an inventory as the numbers would have spoken for themselves. When switching to a study that is qualitative in nature, I wish I would have given students the opportunity to respond to my questions in private, on paper, prior to attending the small group sessions. This may have given those students unable - or unwilling - to share additional conversation to contribute.

Lastly, and the not so ironic issue surrounding this study, is the percentage of students that completed and returned their consent forms. What was I thinking, conducting a study about homework completion, that required what is essentially homework completion for the student to participate? Unfortunately, many of the students did not return their consent forms (53%), or actively decided to disengage from the study when they heard that it was optional. Thankfully I

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

had decided to use such a large sample size, and had more than enough opportunity to have conversations with a wide variety of students representing diverse backgrounds and

Finally, the data suggests that students feel as though mindfulness would in fact help them in completing their homework. However, I use the word “would” rather than “does” in the previous sentence due to the fact that the actual homework completion data does not show this to be true. While providing strong, uninhibited responses, Students in the small groups reported feelings of positivity towards the practice of mindfulness when applied to their schoolwork. However, the data ultimately does not show that mindfulness has a direct effect on students’ homework completion.

Chapter 4

Moving forward, I will absolutely continue to implement small groups into my classroom. While this may sound as the epitome of cliches, I wish it wasn’t over. While it obviously had to come to a close, I take this sentiment into next year’s school year. I am extremely excited to implement the practice of this study into an entire year-long survey of student mindfulness and the practices that go with it. I am excited to continue to break down the data in additional ways not applicable to this study, in an attempt to find ways to service specific populations within my classroom.

As a continuation of mindfulness, I am in the process of securing the “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens” by Sean Covey, and will attempt to use passages within Carol Dweck’s *Mindset: The new psychology of success* to hang up in my classroom. By doing so, I can keep my students mindful of mindfulness!

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

One of the things that I plan on doing next year with my students - and something I wish I would have included in the study - is implementing an individual survey questionnaire on a periodic basis. One of the weaknesses of my study was in the fact that so much of it relied on student responses. As one knows, most twelve and thirteen year olds struggle with the ability to speak clearly and concisely (hence the choppy answers in their responses), and can be intimidated by what their peers may think of them.

With this thought in mind, and the addition of time on my side, I am hoping to take the small group mentality and shift it to a one-on-one model. This could be an extremely ambitious undertaking with the other demands of the classroom clearly still a necessary component of daily instruction, but I feel as though if properly implemented, one-on-one meetings can augment the learning process and help the student to discover their full potential not only in my classroom, but in the entire building that is the middle school.

Chapter 5

With this study completed, I plan to share my findings with colleagues that are interested in hearing about why I've spent long hours holed-up in coffee shops, and what the buzzword "mindfulness" is all about. On a serious note, I plan to share all applicable information with my colleagues within my 7th grade Communications department, and fully plan on presenting it to the entire department in the fall once we have hired additional staff. I feel as though this can be applicable to them as we have some in our department that struggle to implement practice tasks that truly engage and motivate the students to want to complete a given homework opportunity.

I think that it is necessary for me to share with the staff in my building next year, and I may even request to present the information at one of the Professional Learning Community

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

meetings. In doing so, I can help the staff to not only see my insights into student mindfulness and student homework completion, but hopefully help them to see the connections between what we as teachers provide for the students, and their overall willingness and desire to complete a given assignment. Additionally, it may give insight into the amazing relationships I was able to create and further due to the methods mentioned in this action research project. While this may not be an actual research question I attempted to be answered by this study, the study, and conversations I have had with other teachers, has shown me that there may be a link between a student's perception of their teacher and their willingness to complete homework for them.

If this action research process has taught one thing, it is a genuine insight into the perceptions of 7th grade students and how they operate in regards to things that are expected of them from an educational sense. Not so ironically, the action research process performed in this study has been a journey of mindfulness; a journey that has caused me the teacher to be mindful of my own practice and performance within my classroom.

The Relationship of Mindfulness and Student Homework Completion

References

- Barnes, N., & Fives, H. (2016). Creating a context for growth-focused assessment. *Middle School Journal*, 47(5), 30–37.
- Coyle, D. (2010). *The talent code: Greatness isn't born. Its grown*. London: Arrow.
- Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (Ballantine books trade paperback edition.). New York: Ballantine Books.
- Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087-1101. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087
- Karabenick, S. A., & Urdan, T. C. (2010). *The Decade Ahead: Theoretical Perspectives on Motivation and Achievement*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Sansone, C., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2000). *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2002). *Development of achievement motivation*. San Diego: Academic Press.