

MONTERERY COUNTY FREE LIBRARIES

HOMEWORK CENTER EVALUATION 2001-2002

EVALUATION MANUAL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From January 2001 until June 2002, funded by the Packard Foundation Grant #2000-1132, the Foundation for the Monterey County Free Libraries conducted an evaluation study of the homework center program throughout the free library system. This Homework Center Evaluation Manual is the product of that work.

The evaluation study set out to examine both the benefits gained by students who participated at the homework centers and to address how well the homework centers provided services to students. Three primary outcomes for students who utilized the homework centers for study were identified at the outset. It was postulated that students who studied at the homework centers would:

- Develop effective study skills.
- Become active library patrons.
- Become successful role models for their fellow students.

The outcomes component of the evaluation focused on evaluating these participant outcomes. The process component of the evaluation focused on aspects of the homework centers programs that contributed to their success and areas for improvement.

Multiple methods of collecting information were used in this evaluation. It began with a focus group among the homework center coordinators. Observations of individual centers were made throughout data collection and the evaluator interviewed librarians and homework center coordinators at their sites. Library staff and parents completed written questionnaires. Student participants were interviewed with a structured interview questionnaire at the homework center by the evaluator and a group of trained student assistants. Eight classes of students at two local schools completed a paper-and-pencil survey early in the academic year and at its end. Finally, the coordinators completed a daily census that tracked individual student participation at the homework center for one month; at one center the census was carried out for five months.

One important factor limited the evaluation study and the methods utilized. It is central to the philosophy of the libraries and to the operation of the homework centers that participation by students is voluntary. This factor is inextricably linked to the benefits gained by students. Students who wish to become better students have in the library resources and support to do so. More motivated students or those who are familiar with libraries generally may choose to study at the homework center. It is not possible to tease apart student motivation from the benefits they gain from participation. This limits only the causal conclusions that an evaluation study can draw. The value of the services homework centers provide is enhanced, not diminished by student motivation. However, we present all evidence of student outcomes from the evaluation with this caution.

Summary of Findings: Participant Outcomes

Each of the outcomes was defined by a set of indicators that pertained specifically to homework center activities. The homework center coordinators' focus group provided ideas for

the indicators that could be evaluated with quantitative methods. The indicators and projected levels of success that were postulated at the start of the study are reported in Appendix F. Observed outcomes included:

- **Library research skills:** Students' self-reports, parent surveys, homework center coordinators' observations in the focus group, and observations at the homework center sites all provided evidence that students were developing study skills as they worked at the library homework centers.
- **School work:** Both parents and students reported that studying at the homework center had helped the students in school.
- **Study skills:** Coordinators noted that students gained confidence about asking questions, working with others, and learning how to advocate for themselves in school as a result of coming to the homework center. In addition, among the fifth graders surveyed, students who studied at the homework center were more likely to report that others asked them for help with homework than those who did not.
- **Becoming active library patrons:** Over half the students who studied at the homework center also used the library at other times, had introduced another person to the library, and had spent at least some of their time there reading "just for fun."
- **Becoming role models for other students:** Many students who studied at the homework center were role models; they helped others with homework, introduced fellow students to the homework center, assisted when asked by the librarians. At one branch students served as youth advisors to the library. Two students took on the job of homework center coordinator while still in high school.

Summary of findings: Successes and Improvements

The most important measure of success of the homework center program was the positive outcomes for the student participants. A secondary indicator of success was the number of students who choose to study at the homework center. Multiple factors contributed to each of these kinds of success.

The most important contributor to the participant outcomes at the homework center was the homework center coordinator. Students, parents, and library staff all cited the coordinators as central to student outcomes and to the success of the homework centers. At many of the branches branch librarians and other library staff were also actively involved with homework center students. Other adults contributed at several branches. These included volunteers and occasionally parents. The assistance provided students with daily homework and school reports contributed instrumentally to their successful completion of schoolwork. Equally important, the coordinators and other adults provided a safe, supportive environment for the students.

Additional resources that were common to all branches were the computers, books and other print materials. Students named the computers as one of the top three reasons for coming to the homework centers and even when restricted to "homework only" use, the computers were almost never idle. In general, library staff were aware of the kinds of print material students would need for school reports throughout the year and had made efforts to meet those needs.

The number of students who studied at each homework center--whether the census was very high or very low--had to do with a number of factors unrelated to interaction between library staff and students or even branch size and center capacity. Branches varied greatly in the number of students who attended; the May 2001 census showed a range from five students making a total of 26 visits at one branch to over 200 students making nearly 600 visits at another. The primary factors associated with variation in census had to do with geography and other external characteristics of the communities in which the homework centers were located. The proximity of a homework center to a local elementary or middle school or a school bus stop contributed to its use by both students wanting to study and those who needed a safe place to be after school. By the same token, library branches located at a distance from the local schools did not draw students for whom walking was their only mode of transportation. The number of schools (and students) the center drew from also contributed to the number of students who came to many of the centers. Several centers had experienced a drop in census in the preceding two years when many schools, particularly in rural areas, had received grants to operate after school programs.

Several characteristics of the branches themselves also appeared to contribute to the number of students who attended the homework center including the number of years of a center's operation, and the consistency over time of homework center staffing. In several cases the relationship between the homework center and the library branch as a whole appeared to be related to the center's success.

Centers with a large census had unique challenges to do with the branch's capacity to accommodate the number of children who arrived. These included noise and disruption of library service, both to the students and to other library patrons, accessibility of computers, as well as monitoring and responding to actual behavior problems among student users.

Students' Perspective

Students' self reports confirmed our belief that they gained valuable experiences studying at the homework center. In addition to this, students provided a particularly important perspective on the features of the homework centers that contributed to their success and how they might be improved.

The opportunity the homework centers offered for students to spend time and study with their friends was central to both student motivation to study at the homework centers and to the collaborative study skills they exercised while at the homework centers. It was notable that the majority of students who studied at the homework center either came on their own or because a friend had brought them. In addition, students came to the homework centers because the help they received from staff was caring as well as instrumental, and they were able to use the library's resources, especially the computers. Finally, most students told us that studying at the homework center both "made doing homework more fun" and helped them to finish their daily homework.

Overall, students were extremely positive in their evaluation of the homework centers. In the busiest centers, some students, like the library staff, noted that noise and misbehavior caused problems. In addition, at centers where students walked directly from school to the library, some suggested that the homework centers have activities, like games, they could do in addition to homework and a place where they could eat at the library. The most common student suggestions concerned increased access: more homework center hours and days of operation, more staff to help with homework, and more computers.

Recommendations

The homework centers have a great deal in common--a shared philosophy, core activities, and desired outcomes for students. At the same time there are large differences among the branches--most having to do with the size of the homework center user population. Recommendations arising from this evaluation study hinge on these two features.

- Communication among homework center coordinators needs to be regular.
- Administration should facilitate problem-solving between the branch librarian and the homework center coordinator in branches, particularly where there are issues of overcrowding or underutilization.
- At branches with a very high census: Consider hiring another homework center staff person to assist the homework center coordinator, increasing the number of days the center is open, or the number of hours it operates each day.
- At branches with a very low census: Examine carefully the contributing factors. Are they outside the branch's control?
- Publicity: When planning future publicity, it is important to take into account and link publicity to the student-to-student, word-of-mouth publicity that is responsible for a large portion of current attendance.
- Many students are strongly motivated to share their ideas and take leadership roles at the homework centers. Their contribution needs to be encouraged.
- The information contained in this report should be shared with library and homework center staff.

I. INTRODUCTION

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

This manual presents both a description of the methods used in the evaluation as well as the findings obtained. The evaluation study evaluated "outcomes" and "processes." It set out to examine both the benefits gained by students who participated at the homework centers and to address how well the homework centers provided services to students. Three broad benefits for students who came to study at the homework center were identified at the outset: that they would develop effective study skills; that they would become active library patrons; and that they would become successful role models for their fellow students. The outcomes component focused on these participant outcomes. The process component of the evaluation focused on two aspects of the homework centers: the quality of services provided to students and how well the homework centers were integrated into the overall operation of the library branches. Information collected from each group of informants, students, library staff, and parents, spoke to both outcomes and process issues.

HISTORY OF MONTEREY COUNTY FREE LIBRARIES HOMEWORK CENTERS

Monterey County is located in the central coast region of California. Monterey County Free Libraries consists of 17 branches and 3 bookmobiles. The service population is approximately 210,000 people, covering a geographical area of 3,125 square miles. MCFL has an operating budget of \$5.6 million (FY02/03). A significant percentage of the service population speak and read Spanish. Therefore materials and services are frequently provided in English and Spanish. Currently, 11 of the 17 library branches have Homework Center programs. The typical staffing of a mid-size MCFL branch is a full time Branch Librarian/Manager and a full-time Library Assistant II, supplemented by temporary staff. All permanent staff (62.25 FTEs) serve as generalists, providing service to patrons of all ages. Homework Center coordinators are hired as temporary staff at a Library Assistant I level. A coordinator typically works 15 hours per week and provides targeted service to students.

The MCFL Homework Center program began in May of 1991, at the Seaside branch, to support the intensified use of the library by local children after school. Recognizing the success of the Seaside program, the Foundation for Monterey County Free Libraries committed to provide funding for the Seaside Homework Center, as well as centers in King City, Marina, Castroville, Greenfield, Gonzales, Soledad, Prunedale, Carmel Valley, Pajaro, Buena Vista and Aromas. It is the vision of the MCFL Homework Center that "All students in the MCFL service area will have free access to after-school homework assistance in order to meet their needs for educational support and information, regardless of cultural, linguistic, social or economic backgrounds." Currently, each library branch that has an homework center has a coordinator and provides these services to the youth of the community: after-school hours, drop-in assistance, free homework help, motivation to complete homework assignments, research assistance, library skills instruction, homework related tools and resources, skilled and caring service.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION

Informants

An important objective of this evaluation was to approach the issues from multiple viewpoints. Therefore the views of a number of respondents who held different perspectives on the homework centers were obtained. These included library staff, homework center coordinators, the students who attended the homework centers and their parents. Nearly all of the library staff at the branches with homework centers responded to the survey. All of the homework center coordinators participated in the focus group and/or completed a survey. The student survey was completed by 243 students at nine branches. An effort was made to survey representative samples of student participants. The number of students surveys we collected at each branch corresponded roughly to the number of participants at that branch, based on the participant census. The "pre and post" survey was completed by 83 fifth graders at one local elementary school and 54 sixth graders at a local middle school. At least 20% of the homework center participants at their respective library branches came from one of these schools. Nineteen parents completed surveys, the majority parents of students at the Castroville Branch library.¹

Methods Used In the Evaluation

The methods used in this evaluation included several surveys, a focus group, observations during homework center hours, and a census. Each of these methods has its strengths and presents unique challenges, both in the collection and analysis of the data and in its interpretation.

The qualitative methods, including the focus group and the observations, provided rich information that has significant "face validity." The data are readily understandable and believable. They identify important themes and provide concrete individual examples that can be explored further with quantitative methods. However, conclusions made with these data are considered suggestive, not definitive. In addition, although issues of reliability--how representative the data are--and potential bias are present in all evaluation methods, they are often regarded as serious challenges with qualitative methods.

The quantitative methods used in this evaluation included surveys--interviews and questionnaires--and a census of student participation. The survey and interview questions provide a "snapshot" of the beliefs and opinions of the adults who bring about the service of the homework centers, the children who benefit from the services and their parents. The surveys consisted of structured rating-scale type questions as well as open-ended questions. A limitation inherent in this type of "data" is its limited opportunity for respondents to elaborate. Further, young people especially can be very brief when answering even "open-ended" questions. The least "descriptive" of the data gathered were in the census of student participation. While these

¹ Surveying parents proved to be very difficult as the vast majority of students came and went from the homework centers on their own and sending surveys home with children did not usually result in their being returned. Similarly, it was planned originally to survey teachers in schools that homework center participants attended. However, we learned that only 5% of students were referred to the homework centers by school staff. It seemed unlikely we would be able either to obtain a meaningful representation of those staff or to select a representative sample of those who did not.

data do not speak to reasons for participation or outcomes per se, their analysis presents extensive information about the pattern of utilization of the homework centers.

Analyses

Three broad student outcomes were defined at the outset of the evaluation. The participant outcomes were:

- Participants using the homework centers regularly develop effective study skills.
- Participants using the homework centers become active library patrons
- Participants become successful role models for their fellow students.

For each outcome a set of indicators was also defined. (See Appendix) These outcomes and their corresponding indicators guided the evaluation process. Because of the voluntary nature of homework center participation, the study was limited to this examination of "outcomes," not "impacts." Cause-and-effect associations could not be tested without controls such as random sampling and assignment, both of which were not possible given the voluntary nature of these programs. Still, a primary goal of the evaluation was to obtain information about benefits that accrue over time for children who use the homework centers. For this reason, the evaluation included a cross-sectional analysis of survey data from students who had participated in the homework centers for different lengths of time. In addition, a longitudinal survey and analysis of participant and non-participant students' perceptions of their homework skills was conducted as well. This "pre-post" survey was carried out at two schools that had substantial number of students who attended the homework centers.

Organization of the report

In the following section of this report, each method is discussed with respect to its purpose; who provided the data (i.e. who answered the questions); how the data were collected, and what kind of information was obtained. Following this, detailed findings from each method are presented. The Appendix contains original copies of the survey instruments and a parent permission form for the pre and post survey.

II. METHODOLOGY

SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUP, OBSERVATIONS, CENSUS

Surveys were the most commonly used method in this evaluation. Survey information was collected from the student participants, their parents, the homework center coordinators, and the library staff. The surveys are presented separately below.

All of the survey data was entered on excel spreadsheets by an assistant working for the evaluator. Quantitative analyses were done using SPSS-8 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and qualitative responses to open-ended questions were analyzed by hand by the evaluator.

STUDENT PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Purpose

The participant surveys addressed both outcomes and processes. Students were asked questions about their library and school skills and other potential benefits of coming to the homework center and they were asked to evaluate the services of the homework center.

Who provided the data?

A total of 243 students from eight library branch homework centers were surveyed. The data were collected over a period of 3 months in the spring of 2001. The number of students that was surveyed at each center was roughly proportional to the number of students in that center's census.

How were the data collected?

The student surveys were administered individually as interviews. The evaluator and five assistants conducted the interviews. Four of the five assistants were high school or college students identified by the homework center coordinator to help with the interviews. The fifth was a college student who was assisting the evaluator with data management. All were trained by the evaluator and paid for their work. It was a positive experience; the assistants were reliable, enthusiastic and related well with the students they were interviewing.

The interviewers went to the homework center while it was open and approached students studying there. They approached each student and asked each if she or he could be interrupted for 5-10 minutes to be interviewed. If a student declined for whatever reason, they were not disturbed again. Students rarely declined; most often students gathered around the interviewer and asked if they, too, could be interviewed. Several asked to be interviewed multiple times! However, the interviewers made every effort to interview a student once only and they made an effort to insure the privacy of each interview. No names or other identifying information was recorded on the survey. Interviewers returned to the branch multiple times, in an effort to interview as many students as possible.

The interviewer recorded students' answers on individual forms. Most of the questions were close-ended rating scales. For example, students were asked how frequently they came to the homework center and given the choice: every day, once a week, a couple of times a month, once a month or less. Students' responses to open-ended questions were recorded verbatim. Students' responses to these were generally very brief.

What kind of information was gained?

As noted above, the primary purpose of the participant surveys was to obtain students' self-reports about the benefits they had gained from participation at the homework center. Although self-report data is subject to problems of reporter bias--particularly in the direction of socially desirable answers--participants' perceptions of what they gain from participation is an important and meaningful piece of information about a program's outcomes. Three outcomes were examined in the survey: (a) improved study/library research skills; (b) increased library participation; (c) becoming a role model for fellow students. In addition, the skills and behaviors reported by students who had come to the homework center for different lengths of time were compared, yielding a cross-sectional view of the skills and behaviors students may have developed as a result of attending the homework center.

The participant survey also addressed questions of utilization; how long students had been coming to the homework center; how they had first heard about the homework center; and what activities they did at the homework center, including the amount and kind of assistance they received.

The third area addressed by the survey was students' satisfaction with the services they received at the homework center. Student satisfaction was explored through open-ended questions that were analyzed qualitatively.

STUDENT PRE AND POST SURVEY

Purpose

A second student survey was designed to examine student attitudes toward homework as an outcome of participation at the homework center. It was designed to explore whether over time and with experience of studying in the homework center students develop greater confidence in their abilities to do their homework.

Who provided the data?

Students at two local schools completed the survey. The students were in fifth and sixth grade and came from schools who represented a substantial proportion (at least 20%) of the users of the local branch homework center.

How were the data collected?

Parents were informed of the survey prior to data collection and were given the opportunity to refuse consent to their child's participation. One parent did refuse consent. The surveys were self-administered paper-and-pencil measures. Questions that asked students about where they did their homework, who helped them, and their perceived abilities were asked in close-ended 3- or 4-point rating scale format. An open-ended question asked about the kinds of homework help they needed. The surveys were passed out and collected during class time. Students were read the instructions by either the classroom teacher or the evaluator and took 5-10 minutes to complete the surveys. The "Pre" surveys were completed in the beginning of November 2001 and the "Post" surveys were completed at the end of May 2002.

What kind of information was gained?

The survey elicited students' self-assessments of their homework skills. In addition, students were asked where they did their homework, to whom they turned for help with their homework and what kind of homework they needed most help with. Because the classes surveyed had some students who studied at the homework centers and others who did not, we had the opportunity to compare the responses of these two groups as well as to compare students' responses over time.

A pre-post survey is designed to explore changes in attitude or behavior. In this case, we were interested in exploring whether over time and with experience students studying in the homework centers developed greater confidence in their abilities to complete homework and more positive attitudes toward doing homework. Additionally, we were interested in knowing whether there was a change in the pattern of homework center use by the students.

It should be noted that this analysis did not represent an experimental or even a quasi-experimental design. We did not have the opportunity to randomly assign students to the homework center; voluntary participation at the homework centers is an essential element of the program. Therefore, any differences we observed were suggestive only and open to interpretation. The results did provide a general description of homework practices and attitudes of the students at an elementary and a middle school whose students were served by the homework centers.

LIBRARY STAFF SURVEY

Purpose

The library staff survey focused on process: the successes of the homework center at each branch and the challenges it presented.

Who provided the data?

Twenty-nine library staff from nine branch libraries completed the staff survey. These included branch managers, librarians, and library assistants.

How were the data collected?

The surveys were self-administered, paper-and-pencil measures. Questions were asked in both open-ended formats and close-ended rating scales format. Responses were kept confidential; no identifying information was included in the analysis and report. Because staff numbers are small, however, it was not possible to guarantee that individual respondents' answers were not recognizable. The staff appeared to be genuinely interested in providing feedback; their responses were honest and candid. One librarian noted that responding to the survey had opened a dialogue about the homework center that was very helpful.

What kind of information was gained?

Staff were asked to rate the overall success of their branch's homework center, how disruptive it was, how well it was integrated into the branch, and how much it affected their own workload. Open-ended questions addressed the staff's ideas about causes of success and disruption; suggestions for how to handle the challenges and improve the center, as well as what the staff believed were the benefits students gained from participation. They were also asked several questions about whether the homework center had reached its capacity and if there was a need and if it was desirable or feasible to increase the center's capacity. The open-ended response format allowed for great individual variability in responses.

HOMWORK CENTER COORDINATOR SURVEYS

Purpose

In contrast to the focus group, the coordinators' survey focused on processes: what coordinators perceived as the causes of success of their homework center, the challenges the center presented, and their perceptions of the positive and challenging aspects of their jobs.

Who provided the data?

Coordinators from seven branch libraries completed the survey.

How were the data collected?

The surveys were self-administered, paper-and-pencil measures. Questions were asked in both open-ended formats and close-ended rating scales format. Because the number of respondents was small, quantitative data was limited. Most of this survey consisted of open-ended questions. Wherever possible in the report individual's answers were kept confidential. Specific observations about issues of center capacity, materials and other suggestions for center services were identified by branch. Because staff numbers are small, however, it was not possible to guarantee that individual respondents' answers were not recognizable. As with the library staffs' responses to the survey, coordinators appeared to be genuinely interested in providing feedback; their responses were honest and candid.

What kind of information was gained?

The coordinators shared their insights into the needs of students using the homework centers, where these were met, how they could be better addressed. They had many ideas for programs for students and families and additional resources that the centers could use. In addition, they evaluated and made suggestions about training and orientation as well as giving feedback about their familiarity with library policies and procedures. The survey also elicited a general interest among coordinators for more opportunities to share their ideas.

PARENT SURVEYS

Purpose

The purpose of the parent surveys was to obtain parents' views on the benefits their children gained from participation at the homework centers and to obtain information about the reasons parents had for their children's participation.

Who provided the data?

Parents of students who attended three homework centers completed the surveys

How were the data collected?

The surveys were self-administered, paper-and-pencil instruments. They were available in English and Spanish. Parents were asked by the coordinators to complete the surveys when they came to the homework centers to drop off or collect their children. This proved to be not a very successful way to have parents complete the surveys. Parents were often in a hurry, and asked to take the surveys with them. Relatively few surveys (19) were completed. A more successful strategy may be to ask all the students to take home a survey and provide stamped, addressed envelopes to return the surveys that are taken home.

What kind of information was gained?

The parent survey was designed to be simple and brief. It was anticipated that they would be completed at the homework center when parents dropped off or picked up their children. Therefore, three issues only were addressed in the survey. First addressed was parents' motivation for having their children use the homework center, second, whether they had observed any school-related outcomes for their children. Third, those parents whose children attended another after school program, were asked if they saw some particular value of the homework centers compared with other programs. Parents were also given the opportunity to write suggestions.

FOCUS GROUP

Purpose

The focus group's primary purpose was to generate ideas about student outcomes among the homework center coordinators. In addition, the coordinators discussed ways the homework centers might be improved.

Who provided the data?

Seven coordinators and the Managing Librarian for Youth Services participated.

How were the data collected?

Homework center coordinators were given a list of questions to think about in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, the evaluator led the discussion. She opened each topic with a question to the group as a whole. Each coordinator was asked to write a response to the question and given about 1 minute to do so. Then the coordinators shared their answers with each other in pairs. Finally, the coordinators were asked to share their individual answers with the group as a whole. A tape-recorder recorded the discussion and the evaluator summarized each speaker's response on an easel pad at the front of the group. After the focus group, the evaluator reviewed the tape and easel pad notes and prepared the summary. The focus group ran for 2 hours, and addressed the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of the homework center program?
2. Think of a specific example of a student who has benefited from the program. How did s/he benefit from the program?
3. What does your homework center do best?
4. How could your homework center program be better?

What kind of information was gained?

The focus group provided rich descriptive data that reflected both coordinators' perceptions and their hopes for the student outcomes. The focus group provided a foundation on which to build the outcomes evaluation. The coordinators provided qualitative observations about the kinds of outcomes the study should explore quantitatively as well as insights into the processes influencing student outcomes. The homework center coordinators' observations about benefits of participation at the centers informed the questions addressed in the student and the parent surveys. In addition, the homework center coordinators identified outcomes that could not be captured as readily with survey data.

The focus group included coordinators from sites that varied greatly in size and in the demographic characteristics of their student populations. As a result, coordinators were able to discuss the similarities and differences among the centers--they shared ideas that had worked at one site, but not another, and learned how different sites had dealt with similar problems. The sharing of ideas and insights during the focus group was not only important to the gathering of data for the evaluation. In addition, coordinators reported it gave them a sense of support as well as ideas for their work.

HOMEWORK CENTER OBSERVATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of the observations was to describe the dynamics of the day-to-day operation of the homework centers as well as the physical organization of the centers within the libraries and the geographic setting of the libraries in the community and with respect to local schools.

How was the information collected?

Eight homework centers were visited by the evaluator. She arrived at the beginning or during the hours of operation and stayed from 20 minutes (second and subsequent visits) to a maximum of 2 hours at each visit. The observer sat at one of the tables designated for the homework center students or in the center where it was a separate room in the library. She moved around freely, during some visits conducting interviews with students and at others helping students with homework questions.

What kind of information was gained?

Several characteristics of the homework centers that were important to their successful functioning were readily observable at the visits. The geographic location of library relative to local schools, bus stops, and town centers had a major impact on the center's utilization. The location of the center within the library itself had an impact on how disruptive the center was, on adult usage of the library during homework center hours, and the involvement of students with library staff other than the homework center coordinator. The quality of students' interaction with each other and with the homework center coordinators was observable as well. Differences among the centers stood out during the observations as well.

DAILY CENSUS

Purpose

The purpose of the daily census was to describe the pattern of students participation at each homework center.

Who provided the data?

The homework center coordinators. Data from nine centers were analyzed.

How was the information collected?

The Coordinators were provided paper spreadsheets that included a column for students' names, one for the student's grade level, and a column for each day the homework center was open in the month of May. Each homework center coordinator kept a daily sign-in sheet (as always). At the close of each day, the homework center coordinator transferred the information from the daily sign-in sheet to the month's spreadsheet. The first time a child came to the homework center his or her name and grade were added to the spreadsheet and a check mark made in the corresponding date column. Each time a student returned a check mark was placed in that day's column. Student names were recorded in order for the coordinators to keep track of the frequency that individual student came to the center. They were not included in the analysis or any reports.

At the end of the month the data were entered on an excel spreadsheet by an assistant working for the evaluator. Ideally, the spreadsheets would be kept on a computer at the library branch. (Given sufficient computer resources, it would even possible for students to sign-in onto the database themselves.) The process of identifying students from the daily sign-in sheet and cross-referencing those already on the handwritten spreadsheet was too time-consuming and cumbersome a task for the coordinators to continue for any length of time. For example, the Castroville coordinator had a total of 240 individual students' participation to record during the month.

What kind of information was gained?

The homework center census yielded information about the pattern of homework center usage at each library and answered the following questions:

- How many individual students visited each homework center in May?
- What was the total number of visits made to each homework center in May?
- How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center in May?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student in May?
- How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of students at the HWC each day?
- What was the average grade of students who came to the homework center?
- In what grades were the largest numbers of students?

These data could be used to inform a number of different issues, for example, to support hiring additional homework center staff or to extend a homework center's hours or to guide the purchase of resource materials for students at particular grade levels.

It was also possible to compare the number of students who completed the student surveys and their grade levels to determine how representative the sample of students completing the surveys was in comparison with those who used the center regularly.

Seaside Branch Five-month Census (January-May 2002)

In addition to the comparison made across nine branches for one month, we also collected census data at the Seaside Library Branch over 5 months, January through May 2002. The Seaside coordinator recorded the information collected on the daily sign-in sheet onto a computer database (Excel). Each new month, the names and grades of students who had attended the prior month(s) was copied onto a new spreadsheet. A record of these student's participation was continued into the next month and any new students were added.

One purpose of collecting these data was to obtain a pattern of homework center use overtime. As with the other census, the goal was to describe homework center utilization in terms of both the number of individual students who came to the center as well as number of visits that were made to the center.

A second purpose was to test the feasibility of collecting these kind of data.

Questions addressed with the Seaside census data:

The Seaside homework center census yielded information about the pattern of homework center usage at the Seaside branch library and with it we were able to answer the following questions:

- How many individual students visited the homework center each month and over the five months?
- What was the total number of visits made to the homework center each month and over the five months?
- How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center in each month and over the five months?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student?
- How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of students at the HWC each day?
- What was the average grade level of students who came to the homework center?

III. Reports of Evaluation Findings

Surveys

Student Participant Survey - All Branches

I. Descriptive Characteristics: Profile of respondents and their activities at the Homework Centers

A. Schools and grade levels

A total of 243 students were interviewed at the nine branch library homework centers in the spring of 2001. The number of students from each center and at each grade level is presented below. The average grade of students attending each center is also listed.

| Number and average grade level of respondents at each library branch | | | Total number of respondents at each grade level | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|---|--------|
| Branch | Number of respondents | Average grade Of respondents | Grade | Number |
| Aromas | 12 | 6th | 1-4 | 67 |
| King City | 6 | 8th | 5-8 | 122 |
| Gonzales | 8 | 5th | 9-12 | 60 |
| Greenfield | 17 | 6th | College | 4 |
| Marina | 8 | 4th | Average grade (all branches) | 7th |
| Castroville | 99 | 9th | | |
| Seaside | 31 | 5th | | |
| Carmel Valley | 46 | 5th | | |
| Prunedale | 16 | 6th | | |
| Total | 243 | | | |

The average grade of students across all branches was 7th, but branches differed some in the average grade of their participants. The median grade of student participants for each branch is entered in the table above. Students attending the Castroville homework center tended to be older than at the other centers and the respondents at the Marina library were younger, however, there were very few surveys collected at Marina. The students who completed the surveys attended 37 different schools (and several were home-schooled).

B. Usage

The majority of student respondents were regular users of the homework center. Just over half the students (54%) reported coming to their homework center "all the days it is open." About one fifth (19%) came to the center once a week. One quarter came either a couple of times a month or less. Seventy percent of the students did their homework at the homework center as often or more often than they did it at home.

On average, students had been coming to the homework centers 1.7 years, although this varied by site and had to do in part with the length of time the homework center had been in operation. For example, students at the Marina and Prunedale libraries had been coming to the homework center for less than one year on average, while those at the Castroville Library had been coming an average of 2.5 years.

C. "Publicity"

Nearly one-third of the students had learned about the homework center from a friend (32%). One quarter had discovered it on their own (24%). Students had also learned of the homework center from parents (15%) and other family members (14%), especially other youth in their families. Teachers and schools had referred students relatively infrequently (5%).

D. Homework center activities

Students were read a list of homework activities and asked whether they did each "a lot" "some" or did "not do this activity."

The activities most frequently reported by students were: using computers, looking things up for school reports, and getting help with homework. Ninety-one percent of students used the computers at least some of the time. Over 80% of the students indicated they received help with their daily homework or used the library's resources for school reports. Somewhat less frequently, but still the majority of students read for fun and got help with school reports while at the homework center.

Percentage of Students who indicated they did each activity while at the homework center and how often

| Activity | A lot | Sometimes | Don't do this |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Use the computers | 57 | 34 | 9 |
| Look things up for school reports | 48 | 37 | 15 |
| Get help with homework | 36 | 47 | 17 |
| Read for fun | 40 | 35 | 24 |
| Get help with school reports | 35 | 33 | 32 |

II. The Homework Center as a Resource for Homework Help

A. Who helps with homework at the homework center

As noted in the table above, getting help with homework was an activity reported by a large majority of students who used the homework centers. We also asked students who at the homework center gave them help. Over three-quarters (78%) reported they received help from the homework center coordinator and nearly half indicated receiving help from other library staff. Other people who helped students at the homework center included friends (53%), family (26%), and library volunteers (17%). Two-thirds of the students (64%) reported receiving help from two or more people when at the homework center.

A large majority of students (84%) reported that they received the help they needed at the homework center "almost always" or "most of the time." For three-quarters (74%) of the respondents, the library was the only place they went to get homework help. In approximately half of the interviews (N=120) students were asked if they received help with homework from family members at home. 4 out of 5 of these students indicated they got help from family members also.

B. Working with other students

Respondents reported a great deal of collaboration on homework at the homework centers. In addition to those reporting receiving help from friends at the centers (53%), two-thirds (64%) indicated they helped others while at the centers (14% indicated they did this "a lot"); and 62% worked with other students on school projects while at the homework centers.

III. Participant Outcomes

We were interested in exploring whether using the homework center was associated with students developing good study skills or becoming regular users of the library. The analysis we did was limited in several ways. The data are self-report and collected at one time only; they represent the students' perceptions of any impact coming to the homework center had on their skills. Further, as the program is entirely voluntary, no random assignment or comparison group could be included to emulate a research design.

A. Participants develop effective study skills

Several questions in the survey were designed to assess students' perceptions of their study skills. These included questions about how well they were able to perform selected library research activities, whether they completed their homework at the center, and their perceptions of whether and how studying at the homework center helped them in their studies.

1. Library research skills: A large majority of students indicated that they were able to perform basic library research activities either on their own or with assistance. Notable among these is computer literacy, with nearly three-quarters able to use the computer for research on their own. There were only two activities that a majority of students reported they could not do on their own. These were using the catalogue and using the inter-library loan system.

| Percentage of Students with selected library research skills | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Research Skill | Can do "on my own" | Can do "with help" | Total |
| Know how to check out a book | 97 | 2 | 99 |
| Know who to ask for help | 93 | 3 | 96 |
| Look up information for school reports in books | 65 | 29 | 94 |
| Look up information for school reports on the internet | 72 | 19 | 91 |
| Find books on the shelves | 64 | 23 | 87 |
| Know how to get books that are not in this library | 47 | 14 | 61 |
| Use the library catalogue | 41 | 17 | 58 |

2. Finishing homework: Two-thirds of the students indicated they finished their homework "always," or "most of the time," when they came to the homework center. Three-

quarters indicated that doing homework at the homework center "makes doing homework more fun."

3. School performance: A large majority (85%) of students believed that coming to the library homework center had helped them in school. When asked whether their grades were better as a result of coming to the homework center, one quarter of the students (26%) indicated their grades were "a lot better" and nearly half (49%) that their grades were "a little better."

Students who indicated coming to the homework center had helped them in school were also asked how it had helped. Their open-ended responses were grouped into several categories, listed here in order of frequency of response. The most frequent response was that students got help with their homework (87 students). Many students noted the subjects for which they received help (31 of the 87), with the most frequent being Math. In addition, students received help with homework in Science, Social Studies, History, English, Spanish, and Reading. They commented that the homework center staff helped by explaining the assignments as well as giving subject specific help. One student noted that s/he had gained confidence about asking for help. The second most frequent response (35 students) was that students did better in school because they finished their homework at the homework center. A couple commented that coming to the homework center helped them to remember to do all their homework. Twenty-three students indicated that the resources they used at the library helped them to do better in school. Another relatively common answer was that students understood their homework better by coming to the homework center (19 students). Finally, several students cited language writing skills (7 students), reading skills (4 students), having a quiet place to study (5 students), the opportunity to use computers (4 students), and that the homework center was a "fun" place to do homework (3 students).

B. Participants become active library patrons and role models for fellow students

Homework center staff had indicated that they believed that homework center participation encouraged students to read more, to become active library patrons, and to be role models (of library use) to other students. In order to examine whether these outcomes occurred for students, we asked several questions. Students were asked about using the library at times when the homework center was not open, about their reading habits, whether they brought other students to the library or homework center, and whether they ever helped out while at the homework center.

1. Becoming an active library patron and role model: Students' self-reports indicated that many of the homework center users were also active library patrons. Fifty-eight percent (58%) indicated that they came to the library when the homework center was not open. There was substantial variation in this proportion across branches; from 38% to 81% of respondents indicated they came to the library when the homework center was not open. This was due, in part to the fact that homework centers were open only 3-4 days of the week. At branches where students came to the library because it was a safe place to wait for their parents, either to come home or to pick them up, the proportion was higher. Also, a number of students did homework at the libraries on days that the homework centers were not open.

A second measure of students becoming active patrons of both the library and homework center, and role models for their friends, was their response to whether they had ever brought someone else to the library or homework center. Half of the respondents (51%) had brought

someone else to the library for their first visit and nearly two-thirds (64%) had brought someone to the homework center for a first visit. We also asked whether students helped out at the library, a measure of reciprocity for the students. 10% of the students indicated that they often helped out and 20% that they did some of the time. It should also be noted that many students indicated they helped other students with their homework (64%), another indicator of being a role model.

2. Becoming an active reader: Homework center coordinators also believed that studying at the library would have a positive effect on students reading practice. Most of the students (75%) did indicate that they spent some of their time at the homework center "reading for fun." Of these 40% said that they read "A lot" while there. One third of the students indicated they checked out book "often" from the library and an additional 48% indicated they checked out books "some."

C. Testing Outcomes Hypotheses: Do students who come to the homework center develop library research skills or become role models for other students?

Castroville is one of the oldest homework centers in the Monterey County Free Libraries system and it is the largest. Therefore we were able to analyze the responses from students at this library to examine two of our hypotheses about outcomes for students who study at the homework center. To do this we compared the responses from students who had only recently come to use the Castroville homework center with those from students who had been coming for several years.

1. Library research skills and their relation to using the homework center: We hypothesized that students who had spent more years studying at the homework center would report greater library research skills than those who had been coming to the homework center for less time. To test this hypothesis students' responses were grouped by how many years they had been homework center patrons (two years or less versus three years or more). A "library skills" score was created combining students' responses to the three less commonly known skills. These were finding books on the shelves; obtaining books that were not at the Castroville branch; and using the library catalogue. Students' were placed into a "low skills" and a "high skills" group. (Having "high skills" represented knowing how to do at least two of the library research activities "on my own"). 29% of the students who had used the homework center for 2 years or less were in the "high skills" group versus 59% of the students who had used the library for 3 or more years. This difference (29% vs. 59%) is statistically significant ($X^2(df,1)=8.54, p<.01$).

2. Becoming a role model and its relation to using the homework center: We also compared these two groups of homework center users on their responses to indicators of being a "role model" library patron. Indicator questions were: (1) using the library when the homework center was closed; (2) introducing another person to the library or the homework center; (3) checking out books "just for fun"; (4) assisting library staff. Two of these indicators varied as a function of how long students had been using the homework center. Students who had been coming to the homework center two or more years were more likely to indicate that they had helped the library staff or to have introduced another student to the homework center than those who had been coming to the homework center for a year or less. (Helping staff: 30% versus 7%, $X^2(df,1)=5.65, p<.05$; Introducing a student to the homework center: 86% versus 65%, $X^2(df,1)=7.6, p<.01$). Students who had been coming to the homework center a shorter period of time were as likely to check out books and read for fun, help out other students, come to the library when the homework center was not open, or introduce another person to the library as the students who had been coming to the homework center for a longer period of time.

IV. Participant Satisfaction

The survey ended with three open-ended questions:

- What do you like best about coming to the homework center at the library?
- Is there anything you don't like about the homework center?
- Is there anything that would make the homework center a better place for you?

A. What is liked best?

The top three responses to the question of what was like best about the homework center were: the chance to be with friends at the homework center; the helpfulness of library staff; and using the computers.

Being with friends at the homework center: Many students commented that being able to get help from friends, do homework with friends, or just to visit with them while at the homework center was best. Several commented that being with friends made doing homework at the center more fun.

Helpfulness of library staff: Students at all library branches commented on the helpfulness of library staff. Many simply said that the help they received was what they liked best, but a number elaborated, noting, "Staff is very helpful and don't get mad when we ask them to help us"; several noted that the staff were "kind," "patient," and "polite." One summed these sentiments by saying, "If you respect them, they respect you."

Computers: The availability of computers, to write reports, do research, or play games on was also frequently cited as "liked best" about the homework center. One student noted that the computers were "free."

Environment; Library resources; finishing homework, reading: Somewhat less frequently, but still very common comments had to do with the quiet environment of the library. Students contrasted it with their homes, which could be noisy and distracting. Also frequently cited were library resources "lots of books" and the opportunity to read and to finish homework at the homework center.

B. What is not liked?

More than two-thirds of the students indicated that there was nothing they did not like at the homework center. Of those who indicated something not liked, the largest number indicated noise or problems with other students. Next most frequently mentioned was waiting to use a computer and the fact that the homework centers are not open every school day. Two or three students each mentioned crowding, having to wait a long time for parents to pick them up, needing more people to help with homework, and rules, e.g., no food or drink.

C. Suggestions for improvement?

As with the question "Is there anything you don't like about the homework center?" relatively few students had any specific suggestions for improvement and some of the suggestions were site-specific. For example, in one very busy homework center (Castroville), students suggested more space, tables, and chairs to accommodate the number of students who came. In

two sites where students frequently waited for their parents to pick them up and were not necessarily there to do homework (Carmel Valley and Prunedale), students suggested more play area and games as well as snack food. More computers were suggested by several students as were increased hours, more staff to help with homework. Several students suggested "more books" including Star Wars books, and school reference materials. A number suggested the centers be open more days and more hours. Finally, a couple each mentioned more control of noise and rude students, and a place to eat.

IV. Summary Observations

Students' responses to the survey indicated support for the three outcomes we set out to examine: that students develop effective study skills, become active library patrons, and successful role models for their fellow students. In each instance, students were very positive in their self-assessments and in their overall evaluation of their homework center experience. It must be noted, of course, that young people often over-estimate their abilities and may be influenced by the interview process to give positive or "socially desirable" answers. Further, the variations in response that were found between students who had attended the homework centers for different amounts of time are also most likely the result of several factors--including age and motivation--in addition to homework center experience. The findings must be considered with these cautions in mind.

Study skills: The majority indicated that they were able to perform basic library research activities on their own, including how to check out books, look up information in books and on the internet, and they knew whom to ask for help. We also found evidence that students who had been coming to the library longer had learned more "advanced" library research skills including use of the electronic catalog and interlibrary loan services, as well as finding books on the shelves. They were also very positive in their assessments of the benefits of coming to the homework center to their own school performance. Large majorities of the students indicated that studying at the homework center had helped them finish their homework regularly and improve their grades. Students expressed confidence in their abilities to help others with homework as well as to work collaboratively on research projects.

Active library patrons: Indicators that students using the homework centers were also active library patrons included their reports of their coming to the library when the homework center was not in session, reading and checking out books "just for fun," and introducing others to the library. A majority of students reported doing these activities.

Role models: Overall, relatively large numbers of students engaged in activities considered "role modeling," including introducing another student to the homework center, and helping out if asked by the library staff. These two activities were more likely to be reported by students who had been coming to the homework center for longer periods of time.

Students indicated that they were drawn to the library homework center particularly because (a) it was a place they could be with friends; (b) the help they received from staff was caring as well as instrumental; (c) they were able to use the library's resources, especially the computers.

Word-of-mouth publicity was the primary source of publicity at all the centers, from the smallest to the largest. Consistent with the students' above observation that one important reason

they came to the homework centers was the chance to be with friends, friends were the homework centers' number one "referral source."

Students' suggestions for improvements were for the most part specific to the library branches. Students commented on the need for space, more computers, and problems with noise at the busiest sites. Students who came directly from school, at centers that were in close proximity to the school, discussed the need for things to do other than homework and a place to relax (and eat) at the center.

Student Pre and Post Surveys

Fifty-four sixth graders and 83 fifth graders completed the survey in both November and May. Their responses yield "snapshot" of the settings where they did homework, the people who helped them, and the confidence the students' felt doing their homework. Both time points are presented. The survey questions were identical, except as to the names of particular programs and library branches. Data and analyses from each school are presented separately.

I. Middle School Students Survey (6th grade)

A. Settings: Where students did their homework

Students were asked to indicate how often they did their homework in each of five settings: home, a friend's house, the library homework center (HWC), school, and the local after school program. They could choose either "Often," "Sometimes," or "Never." Below are listed each of the settings and proportion of students who responded that they did their homework in that setting either "Sometimes" or "Often."

The largest percentage of 6th grade students did their homework at home at both time points. Two changes occurred from pre- to post-survey. Higher proportions of students reported doing their homework at the library homework center and at a friend's house at the end of the year than had at the beginning of the year (11% and 10% respectively). These differences in proportions did not reach statistical significance, however.

| Percent of Students Responding "Sometimes" or "Often" | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Setting | Pre Survey | Post Survey | Change (5% or more) |
| Home | 100% | 96% | No |
| During School | 58% | 62% | No |
| Friend's house | 53% | 63% | Increase 10% |
| After School Program | 39% | 42% | No |
| Library HWC | 15% | 26% | Increase 11% |

B. People who help with homework

Teachers were most frequently cited as helping with homework among the Gambetta students at both time points, but changes over time occurred in the proportion of students who received help from parents, siblings, friends or librarians at the homework center. Fewer parents provided help to students at the end of the year while more received help from siblings, friends or at the homework center. Again, the changes did not reach statistical significance.

**Percent of Students Responding
"Sometimes" or "Often"**

| Person who helps with Homework | Pre Survey | Post Survey | Change (5% or more) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Teacher | 96% | 95% | No |
| Parent | 91% | 82% | Decrease 9% |
| Brother or Sister | 42% | 52% | Increase 10% |
| Friend | 79% | 87% | Increase 8% |
| Librarians | 14% | 19% | Increase 5% |

C. Students' Perceptions of their homework skills

Students were queried about five issues related to doing homework. These included finishing homework, doing homework without help, understanding their homework, answering questions that other students were unable to answer, and being asked for help by other students. For each topic they were asked to choose one of four statements that best described what "is true for you." The statements were ranked from least confident (1) to most confident (4).

The averages of students' ratings for each topic at each time point are reported below. Overall, students rated their abilities to do homework in the moderate to high range. There were no statistically significant changes over time in students' responses. The highest rating on average was for finishing homework and the lowest was for being asked by other students for help with homework. The average for each item and its corresponding statement are listed below.

| Topic | Average Rating | | Corresponding statement: |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--|
| | Pre | Post | |
| Finish Homework | 3.2 | 3.0 | "I finish my homework most of the time." |
| Trouble understanding homework | 3.0 | 3.0 | "I sometimes have trouble understanding my homework." |
| Do homework without help | 2.9 | 2.9 | "I can do most of my homework without help." |
| Answer questions others can't | 2.4 | 2.5 | "I can sometimes/usually answer homework questions other students don't understand." |
| Others ask me for help | 2.0 | 2.2 | "Other students sometimes ask me to help them with homework." |

We then compared students' answers to these questions, dividing the group between those students who never did their homework at the library homework center, and those who did their homework there either at least "Sometimes." Again, there were no statistically significant differences between the group who studied at the homework center and those who did not.

The final question on the survey asked students what kind of help they needed with homework, when they needed help. The format was open-ended and students were provided an opportunity to describe help they needed for Daily Assignments, Reports, and Other. Their responses were tabulated and returned to each of the teachers whose classes participated in the survey. Overall, the largest number of students at both time points indicated they needed help

with Social Studies, particularly History. Second most frequently reported was Math and Science, with Language Arts third most frequently reported.

II. Elementary School Students Survey (5th grade)

A. Settings: Where students did their homework

The 5th grade students most often did their homework at home at both time points. Although not statistically significant, There was an increase in the proportion of students who did their homework at the library homework center and a decrease in the proportion of students who did homework at a friend's house from the early to the latter part of the year. Below are listed each of the settings and proportion of students who responded that they did their homework in that setting either "Sometimes" or "Often."

| Percent of Students Responding "Sometimes" or "Often" | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Setting | Pre Survey | Post Survey | Change (5% or more) |
| Home | 98% | 100% | No |
| During School | 26% | 29% | No |
| Friend's house | 75% | 70% | Decrease 5% |
| After School Program | 4% | 3% | No |
| Library HWC | 60% | 65% | Increase 5% |

B. People who help with homework

Parents were most frequently cited as helping with homework among the 5th grade students at both time points. Small decreases in the proportions of students getting help with homework from each of the potential "helpers" were reported at the end of the year with 6% fewer reporting help from friends and 8% fewer reporting help from the homework center library staff.

| Percent of Students Responding "Sometimes" or "Often" | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Person who helps with Homework | Pre Survey | Post Survey | Change (5% or more) |
| Parent | 99% | 98% | No |
| Teacher | 85% | 81% | No |
| Friend | 77% | 71% | Decrease 6% |
| Brother or Sister | 42% | 38% | No |
| Librarians | 36% | 28% | Decrease 8% |

C. Students' Perceptions of their homework skills

The averages of students' ratings for each topic at each time point are reported below. The highest rating on average was for finishing homework and the lowest was for being asked by other students for help with homework. Only one of these items differed from beginning to end of the year and between students using the homework center and those who did not. All of the students indicated being asked for help by others more often at the end of the year than they had

at the beginning (paired comparison t -test=-2.7, $p<.01$). And, at both time points students who studied at the homework center indicated that they were asked for help more often than those who did not ($t=2.1$, $p<.05$ and $t=2.8$, $p<.01$).

The average for each item and its corresponding statement are listed below.

| Topic | Average Rating | | Corresponding statement: |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------|--|
| | Pre | Post | |
| Finish Homework | 3.5 | 3.5 | "I finish my homework most/all of the time." |
| Trouble understanding homework | 3.1 | 3.1 | "I sometimes have trouble understanding my homework." |
| Do homework without help | 3.1 | 3.1 | "I can do most of my homework without help." |
| Answer questions others can't | 2.5 | 2.5 | "I can sometimes/usually answer homework questions other students don't understand." |
| Others ask me for help | 1.9 | 2.1 | "Other students sometimes ask me to help them with homework." |

The final question on the survey asked students what kind of help they needed with homework, when they needed help. The format was open-ended and students were provided an opportunity to describe help they needed for Daily Assignments, Reports, and other. Their responses were tabulated and returned to each of the teachers whose classes participated in the survey. By a large margin, more students reported needing help with Math than with any other subject; nearly half of the students indicated they needed math help at each time point. Other subjects cited by students were Science, Spelling, Social Science, and Reading. Additionally, a number of students reported needing help with the mechanics of doing their homework, including researching, organizing, and writing book reports as well as understanding directions and questions in their assignments.

III. Summary Observations

It was not surprising to find few statistically significant changes in students' responses to these surveys. The students could not be randomly assigned to a homework center "condition" and the frequency with which students attended the homework centers could not be "controlled" in a manner in keeping with the assumptions of an experimental or quasi experimental design. Because of this, the few patterns that were observed must be interpreted only as indicators of possible trends.

The only attitude measure that differed across time and students was among the fifth grade students. Those who studied at the homework center saw themselves being asked more often for help by their fellow students than those who did not. At the same time, overall, students reported being asked for help by friends more often at the end of the year. One possible interpretation of these findings is that at a time when students are developing collaborative study skills, this development is enhanced by participation at the homework center. However, it should be noted also that students who like working with other students may choose to study at the homework center, contributing to the observed finding. In addition, the decreases noted in the proportion of students who reported that they sought help from friends at the end of the year complicates this interpretation.

Among the sixth graders no change over time in student attitudes was observed, but there was a suggestion of a change in the pattern of whom the students sought for help with their homework. Fewer students reported that their parents helped them with homework at the end of the year than had in early November. Concurrently, more students reported receiving help from friends, siblings, and homework center librarians at the end of the year and there was an increase in the number of students who studied at the homework center as well. These changes reflect trends only, they did not reach statistical significance. However, one possible interpretation is that as they get older students rely less on their parents, and in this instance, more on friends, siblings, and others. Among the middle school students we surveyed a large number are the children of Mexican immigrant parents who may have been less able to help with English-language based homework as their children advanced in school. Parents and students at several homework centers have told us that the bilingual support students receive there is especially important.

Finally, the information students gave about the kinds of homework help they needed varied by school and grade. It provides the homework centers with important information about how they can best meet the needs of their patrons. Among the fifth graders Math was clearly the most challenging subject, and learning to craft reports and understanding instructions stood out as well. Among the sixth graders students' needs were more broadly distributed across subjects, with social studies being the most often cited. Having the print and other resources to support students' efforts in these areas, as well as understanding the changing demands and individual needs of the students coming to the homework centers are important challenges for the libraries to address.

Branch Library Staff Survey

29 library branch staff from 9 branch libraries completed the staff survey. These included nine supervising librarians/branch managers and 19 library assistants. (One respondent did not indicate her/his staff position.)

I. Overall Evaluation of Homework Centers

A. Overall rating of success

Two thirds of the staff rated their homework centers as "Outstanding" or "Very" successful. Gonzales, Soledad and King City branches were rated as less than outstanding or very successful by at least one staff member.

B. Reasons for success

The homework center coordinators were cited as the main reason for success throughout the system. Other factors noted were: bilingual services, administrative and staff support, having an adequate number of computers, tutors.

Comments about the coordinators:

- Our coordinator has done a wonderful job in every way.
- The coordinator--definitely the most important.
- Our homework coordinator is always prepared to help the students.
- [Coordinator] maintains a friendly atmosphere, but does not allow students free reign.
- A very dedicated and involved coordinator.

C. Importance of the service

16 of the 29 respondents indicated that the homework centers were a "Very important" service of the library. 3 each indicated that the homework center was "Moderately" or "Somewhat" important and one, "Not at all."

II. Student outcomes

In response to the question whether staff had witnessed development(s) in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors among the students who use the homework center, 15 replied "Yes," 2 replied "No," and 9 made no answer. The developments staff noted included

Library skills

- "How to locate information, how to use library internet sites."
- "Students become more sophisticated library users. Young people go to the computers, reference area and seek out the help they need."

Discipline

- "Several students who had behavior problems at the beginning of the school year have improved very noticeably."

Cooperative learning skills

- "Students are learning how to work cooperatively helping and instructing others."

School success

- "Several of our HWC kids have come in and said they received A's on projects staff helped with. Makes it all worth it."

III. Challenges**A. How disruptive is the homework center (HWC)?**

Fourteen of the staff rated their homework center as Moderate or Very disruptive to the library's daily functioning. Three indicated the HWC was Somewhat and 8 Not at all disruptive. All of the homework centers except Gonzales were rated as Moderate or Very disruptive by at least one staff person.

B. Causes of disruption

- Noise level, pent-up energy
- Space (lack of space for number of students)
- Unruly students, students not doing homework, horseplay in main library area
- Computers (Disagreements over, playing games, "hogging" adult computers)

C. Suggestions**How to deal with overcrowding**

- We have had to reduce the number of students who can come in to the number we have seating for in the library at a given time; also, at the busy times we have had to limit usage to students doing homework, reading, and using computers.
- Use the side HWC door in good weather.
- Students not attending HWC should not be dropped off in front of library. Schools should have more communication with students regarding HWC. More outreach info to schools re HWC.
- Expand facility.
- Need a separate area for the center and computer lab area.
- Ask school program to have buses stop elsewhere (next school year).

Monitoring/supervising children

- Everyone on the staff consistently upholding behavior standards appropriate for a library setting
- More contact with the parents from HWC.
- Students use meeting room for quiet or group projects.
- Children should remain in youth room (not enough seats, though), so adults are not bothered.
- Possible volunteers (parents?) to help monitor the students.

- Just keep reminding children to be quiet; When asked, the kids can be quiet and work cooperatively.
- More paid staff.

Computers

- One of the causes of disruption was all computers were tied up by students from 3-6. Adults were accommodated by designating machines for adults and students.

IV. Management Issues

A. Adding to workload

Two-thirds of the staff indicated that the homework center added "A little" or "Very little" to their workload and one-third that it added "Moderately" or "A great deal." Two kinds of additional work that came up were assisting students with library research and discipline. One librarian noted that the workload was significantly less since they hired a HWC coordinator. One of those whose work was added to "A great deal" commented, "That's great--We're here to serve the kids as much as anyone."

B. Integration of HWC into branch

Thirteen staff felt the homework center was well-integrated into the library, thirteen that the integration of the HWC was "Acceptable" and two that it was "Not very Well" integrated. The branch where two staff indicated the HWC was "not very well" integrated was Soledad.

C. Management of homework center

1. At branch level: When asked if there needed to be more or less involvement with the management of the homework center at the branch level, five respondents indicated "More" while 23 indicated "As is." One Branch Manager noted, "This survey opened a valuable dialog [with HWC coordinator] for me." Branches where at least one staff member indicated more involvement needed were Carmel Valley, Gonzales, Prunedale, and Seaside. Suggested involvement included:

- I should be more open to HWC coordinator to discuss problems and successes.
- Library orientation given by branch staff, about finding, using materials.

2. At the administrative offices (AO) level: Twelve staff members felt there should be more involvement with HWC management at the AO level. Branches where at least one staff member indicated more involvement needed were Carmel Valley, Gonzales, Prunedale, and Seaside and Soledad. Suggestions for kinds of increased involvement were:

- Workshops to assist coordinators with little or no experience.
- Monthly meetings with all coordinators
- Workshops for improvement and growth.
- Registration of students (parents' name, address emergency phone number)
- Visits, observation of the homework center in action.
- Standardization of goals and objectives from branch to branch.
- Workshops for students, e.g. internet, library orientation.
- Advertising HWC in local papers (two branches).

C. Coordinators

1. Supervision: Twenty-four respondents indicated it was clear who supervises the HWC coordinator; five said it was not. Branches where at least one staff member indicated it was not clear who supervised the HWC coordinator were Gonzales, Greenfield, Prunedale, and Soledad.

2. Familiarity with general library policies and procedures: Sixteen respondents indicated the HWC paid staff at their branch were "Very" familiar" with policies and procedures; 11 indicated they were "Somewhat" familiar; and two indicated they were "Not at all" familiar. The two branches where a staff member indicated the HWC coordinator was not familiar with policies and procedures were Prunedale and Soledad.

3. Answering reference questions: In answer to the question: How often do students or other library patrons ask you reference questions, 14 respondents answered "Don't know" or left the question blank. Three indicated "Rarely," 7 said "Occasionally," and 5 indicated "Frequently."

4. Referring reference questions: In answer to the question: How often does your HWC coordinator refer questions to you, four indicated "Frequently"; ten indicated "Occasionally" and ten indicated "Rarely."

V. Improving the Homework Centers

Observations tended to be specific to each branch. Summarized briefly by branch, these were the suggestions made for the homework centers.

Aromas: More hours especially on Wednesday (school out early).

Carmel Valley: Computers (more, more fair utilization); planned activities for students; separate room; parents need to know rules; emergency phone numbers for students.

Castroville: Need to be higher salaries for homework center coordinators who have worked for MCFL for over a few years.

Greenfield: More adult supervision.

Gonzales: More outreach; activities.

King City: More advertising, perhaps.

Prunedale: More space; better work tables; better visibility from Circulation/Reference Desk.

Seaside: More branch involvement (beyond printing); library orientation; program about internet use; More tutors; More students.

Soledad: Publicity (at library and in community, schools.)

VI. Capacity, need, desirability of increased enrollment, resources for homework center

A. Staff were asked three questions about capacity:

- Has the homework center at your branch reached its capacity as it is currently set up?
- Is there a need in your community or among your patrons for the homework center at your branch to provide service to more children?
- Would you like to see your homework center provide services to more children than it does?

Staff's responses varied by library branch and at some branches staff's responses were divided as well. Responses are summarized by branch below. The number of respondents at each branch is in parentheses.

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Aromas (1) | One respondent noted HWC has reached capacity most days. Would like to provide services to more children and noted that if they had more space, more children would come to the homework center. |
| Carmel V. (5) | Five respondents, some mixed response. Most felt the HWC operates at capacity, but some observed that this is because HWC serves as a child-care facility and not a HWC for some of the children. Mixed desire to increase capacity; particularly for "child-care"; one noted that local after school program needs to increase its availability. |
| Castroville (1) | One respondent noted HWC has reached capacity and seems to be meeting general need in area; any expansion must be proportional (i.e. to staffing). |
| Gonzales (3) | All noted HWC has not reached capacity and that increasing capacity was desirable, noting needs of students in area and need for additional services at HWC. |
| Greenfield (3) | All felt HWC had reached its capacity, but were divided about the need and desirability of providing services to more children; one noted the HWC was, "so crowded as is." |
| King City (2) | Both noted HWC had reached capacity, but neither felt either need or desirability for services to more students; one noted that 3 area schools all have after school programs. |
| Prunedale (4) | Responses were mixed to all three questions; 2 felt HWC had reached capacity, 2 did not; 3 saw need for services to more students, 1 did not; 2 felt it was desirable to provide services to more children, 2 did not; one noted there were after school programs in area. |
| Seaside (4) | Responses were divided; two felt HWC had reached capacity; two not. Three felt services for more children were needed and desirable, one did not. This one noted the library did not have staff or volunteers to provide more services. |
| Soledad (5) | All felt the HWC had not reached capacity; they were divided about the need for providing HWC service to more children (2 yes; 3 no), but all felt this was desirable. |

B. Providing service to more students

Those who felt it was desirable to provide services to more students were asked what was needed to do so. Several options were presented, including more space, more hours for homework center, more hours for library, more personnel, publicity. In general, space, hours (both HWC and library), and personnel were identified by the majority of centers as needs. The pattern of responses differed somewhat for the branches. For example, staff at Aromas and Castroville identified needing everything but publicity, while for Gonzales and King City staff publicity was the only identified need.

| <i>Branch</i> | <i>Space</i> | <i>HWC Hours</i> | <i>Library Hours</i> | <i>Personnel</i> | <i>Publicity</i> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Aromas | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Carmel V. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ ^a | ✓ ^b |
| Castroville | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Gonzales | | | | | ✓ |
| Greenfield | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| King City | | | | | ✓ |
| Prunedale | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ ^c | ✓ ^d |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| Seaside | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Soledad | | | ✓ |

Additional ideas:

^aIncluding volunteers.

^bColumn like Herald use to have "at the library."

^cPaid assistant as back-up and to provide some tutoring.

^dMore contact coordination between the HWC program, schools, and parents.

Other issues: The last question on the survey asked if there were any other specific issues that were not raised in the survey. Issues raised were:

- "Many children arrive hungry."
- "We need some kind of relief for our HWC coordinator. We are happy to cover, but it would be better to have a real substitute HWC coordinator or we could have something like MCFL or system wide or area-wide HWC substitutes. "
- "There needs to be higher salaries given to HWC who are deserving and have worked for MCFL for over a few years."
- "The program has worked well with the limited resources. I would like to see a position dedicated to overseeing the homework center program. More site visits and meeting with the coordinators and branch supervisors."

Feedback: Other observations that have been shared with staff:

- "Parents appreciate the safe, supportive atmosphere."
- "A few parents use the HWC as a baby sitting service and leave their children there much too long."
- "We had a wonderful response at our recent open house. The attendance of parents--some coming to the library for the first time--was lovely."
- "Parents appreciative, other patrons sometimes complain about the noise level and when students hang out in front of library."

VII. Summary Observations

The open-ended nature in most of the questions in this survey resulted in a great range of ideas, particularly with regard to ways to improve the homework centers. Not only did staff responses differ across branches, within branches there were disagreements as to whether the center had reached its capacity, and the need to reach more students. It was also notable that the centers with low census were also those that the staff did not rate "Outstanding" or "Very" successful.

The homework center coordinators were considered the primary reason for the homework centers' success. Primary concerns were divided. Among centers with large numbers of students over-crowding, noise, and disruption of the library were the most frequent concerns. Among those with few students, the low census itself was the primary concern.

The majority of the branch staff noted a parallel set of student outcomes to those described in the coordinators' focus group with library skills, discipline, cooperative learning skills and school success heading the list.

Homework Center Coordinators Survey

Seven of ten homework center coordinators completed a survey at the end of the school year. (Surveys were not returned from Marina, Soledad, or Carmel Valley coordinators.) Survey questions covered two broad topical areas: the services provided by the homework centers and the job of homework center coordinator. Within these, topics included: **Homework center services:** Overall evaluation, Meeting the needs of students, Management issues; **Job of coordinator:** Satisfaction with job, Supervision, Knowledge/training needs, Communication.

I. Homework Center Services

A. Overall evaluation

Overall, five coordinators indicated they believed the homework centers at their branches were "Very" successful or "Outstanding." One indicated the center was "Moderately" successful and one did not respond to this question.

Asked what might be done to improve the center at their branch, five indicated more hours (SE, GF, CS, AR, PR); three coordinators indicated publicity (GO, SE, GF); two said more space (AR, CS); two indicated more personnel (CS, SE); and one each mentioned workshops on school subjects (GO) and a language lab for parents (CS).

B. Meeting students' needs

1. Capacity reached: Three coordinators thought their centers had reached capacity (SE, KC, CS); one indicated that it had on "some days" (AR). Of these four, all but the King City coordinator indicated the need to accommodate more children at their sites.

2. Additional hours: Four coordinators indicated the HWC was not open enough hours to meet the needs of the branch's patrons (SE, GF, CS, AR).

3. Copying: Four centers had some or all students who were unable to pay for copying. Several coordinators suggested copies should be free to students doing homework and several suggested ways they had raised money for copying at their centers.

4. Access to computers: All but one (CS) indicated students had the access they needed to computers. The CSroville coordinator said they could use several word processing computers in addition to those dedicated to the Internet.

5. Support materials: The majority of coordinators had suggestions for support materials. These included:

- Math materials, text books
- Calculators, office supplies
- Encyclopedias, school-oriented reference materials
- Educational (noncomputer) games
- Books for boys (skateboarding, sports, space)
- Awards materials (stickers, cards, books)

- Books on missions, early explorers, marine life

6. Programs: Four of the coordinators indicated they would like to have monthly programs at the HWC. Suggestions for topics included: any kind that might help children and parents (drugs, sex ed., life skills); Music, Art, Computers, Rural Development Project, Citizenship, Exotic foods, Poetry; something to draw parents; study habits, instruction on use of library equipment, library resources.

C. Management issues

All indicated that the HWC was "well" or "acceptably well" integrated into the branch and most of the coordinators were satisfied with the level of involvement with the homework center, both at the branch level and the level of the Administrative Office. Only one indicated that there should be more involvement of both and one that there should be more involvement of both "maybe." No one elaborated on his/her responses.

II. Job Of Coordinator

A. Satisfaction with job

All indicated they were very satisfied with the job of homework center coordinator. Ideas for what could be done to make their job more satisfying included:

- More students
- Coordinator could be better utilized by branch when HWC not busy
- Better pay
- More opportunities to get together with other HWC coordinators
- Regular time with branch librarian to discuss how things are going.
- More training opportunities

B. Supervision

All indicated that they were clear as to who supervised them and that they received enough support from their supervisors. Four of the seven indicated that they would like to have regular evaluations of their work.

C. Knowledge of library policies, answers to reference queries

1. Library policies: Five indicated that they worked in some other capacity beside HWC coordinator at the library and all five felt that this enhanced their ability to provide HWC assistance. Four indicated they were "very" familiar with library policies and procedures and three indicated they were "somewhat" familiar with these. Only one was asked about policies and procedures frequently; six indicated they were asked "occasionally" and none indicated they had specific questions regarding policies and procedures.

2. Patrons' reference questions: Six received reference questions from students and other patrons "frequently," and they only "occasionally" or "rarely" referred their questions to other library staff. One noted she referred to other staff when she was busy and also to familiarize students with other library staff so they would know who to go when the HWC was closed.

D. Training

1. Orientation: All found the orientation for new coordinators "acceptable." One suggested that new coordinators "should visit a day or two at other sites to see how it works before starting."

2. Training: All felt that the training they had participated in were useful. Three indicated they had other training needs, including: meetings to check -in with other coordinators, mathematics, reference training, literacy training, information on books recommended for different reading levels.

3. Training manual: Opinions about the training manual were mixed: some felt it was very useful, a good foundation; others never used it or found that on-the-job learning was more useful.

E. Communication

1. Reports: All indicated that the monthly reports were "ok" for them. Two coordinators requested that the statistics drawn from them be shared with the coordinators.

2. Newsletter: The majority of coordinators indicated they would like to have a news letter (four), list service (five) and regular meetings (five). Five indicated they would be willing to contribute to a list service or newsletter.

Parent Survey

Nineteen parents completed parent surveys. Their children attended one of three homework centers: Aromas, Castroville, or Carmel Valley. The largest number of these came from Castroville (13). Their children ranged from 2nd to 12th grade; several had more than one child who used the homework center. Nine children were in 2nd-4th grade; 13 children were in 5th-8th grade; and 3 children were in high school. Eight surveys were completed in Spanish and eleven in English.

I. Why parents want their children to go to the homework center

Parents were asked why they wanted their children to use the homework center; they were given a choice of eight reasons and the opportunity to write in one of their own. Most parents had more than one reason why they wanted their children to use the homework center. In fact, parents checked an average of 6 reasons; five parents included their own reasons in addition to those listed on the survey. In order of frequency, parents indicated the following reasons for why they wanted their children to go to the homework centers:

| Reason | # of parents |
|--|--------------|
| My child gets help with his/her homework here. | 18 |
| My child learns to use the library when s/he comes to the homework center. | 17 |
| My child gets to know the library staff here. | 16 |
| It is a safe place for my child to spend time after school | 15 |
| It is convenient, i.e., it is close to school/home. | 15 |
| My child finishes his/her homework when s/he comes here. | 14 |
| My child reads more when s/he comes to the homework center. | 12 |
| My child spends time with friends here. | 9 |

In addition, individual responses given by parents were:

- My child gets the information that he needs or advice where he can find it.
- The librarians provide information and help when researching school projects.
- [I am] learning to use the computer.
- It helps him with his grades.
- It's a chance [for me] to spend quality time with my daughter.
- Great environment for our kids to be around.
- My child can come here to use the computer.

When asked, which of the above was the most important reason for their child coming to the homework center, **getting help with homework** was cited most often (7 parents). That the homework center is **a safe place for children** was cited second-most often (5 parents). Convenience, finishing homework, learning to use the library, getting help with school projects, and reading more were also cited by one or two parents.

II. Outcomes--School success and reading

Half of the parents (10) indicated that coming to the homework center had helped their children **a great deal**. Eight others indicated it had helped their children **some**. Only one indicated not knowing the homework centers' impact on the child's school work.

Half of the parents (10) also felt that coming to the homework center had helped their children **a great deal** to become better readers. Five noted some impact in this area; two indicated no impact and 2 did not know.

III. Comparison with after school programs.

We asked those parents whose children participated in other after school programs (nine) whether their children got something out of coming to the homework center that s/he did not in the other program. Parents noted that at the library homework center children have greater variety of books and educational computer games to choose from; they get the help and the information they need; they learn to take direction from adults other than mom; and they become interested in problems of the community.

IV. Suggestions

Parents had few suggestions for the libraries. These included having the homework center open everyday; to try to keep the noise level down; to have more (Spanish language) stories, replacing the worn-out copies, and to lower the price of copying.

V. Summary Observations

In spite of the small number of respondents, parents contributed an important perspective to the homework center evaluation. For example, while virtually all saw their students' education benefiting from homework center participation, most parents had multiple reasons for wanting their children to spend time at the homework center. In addition to the educational benefits of studying at the library, these included the fact that the homework center was a safe place for their children to spend time after school, and its convenience to home and/or school.

Homework Center Coordinators Focus Group

Eight homework center coordinators and the managing librarian for youth services participated in a focus group facilitated by the program evaluation consultant. It lasted two hours and was audio-taped. The group discussed the following questions:

1. What are the strengths of the homework center program?
2. Can you think of specific examples of students who have benefited from the program? How did they benefit from the program?
3. What does your homework center program do best?
4. How could your homework center program be better?

The discussion of each question is outlined below. Answers are grouped by theme and an effort has been made to paraphrase as closely as possible what an individual speaker said.

I. What are the strengths of the homework center program?

A. Provides children in the community with a unique environment

A community center that emphasizes learning, reading

A public place to do homework; a community place where kids feel that they belong and can come in. It is usually a safe place, although its openness sometimes lets in kids who don't want to do homework.

A resource rich environment surrounded by books, magazines, contrast to home which may not have books, magazines, may have t.v. on all the time. Student once said, "I would like to live in this place!"

Sends the message that the library cares about you and your homework, that you belong here. One way this is conveyed is through the individual attention coordinators give students, another is by displaying their work in the homework center.

It opens a new world of books.

A place that welcomes children and their families

Parents come in asking for help for their children, also come to homework center to help their own children with homework, meet their children at the library; e.g., a parent who helps with computer use; spends time with kids on the computer.

Parents also come in and read and look at magazines while child is in homework center.

Coordinator's family members serve as role models; coordinators bring own children or nieces and nephews into center and others observe them there.

Now seeing older students bring in younger family members, after they have been coming for awhile.

The HWC provides an opportunity to make connections with others who have skills. Parent met an older student at homework center who is now tutoring her child; this parent is paying for the tutoring; child is getting in-depth help with homework. We cannot give that level of support.

Students learn about the library at the homework center

The homework center has changed young people's feelings about the library; it has become a "cool" place, a place where young people can go. And they are learning the mechanics of the library, e.g. how to check out books, and in this way it "grooms" them to be able to use the library in the future.

B. Nature of homework help differs from that received at school or at home

Students learn reciprocal learning/teaching skills

We create a culture of doing homework: they learn to help each other, seeing examples of helping. Students get the opportunity to show their skills, be an expert, get rewarded for own skills, especially second language users who don't get this in school, especially now because of change to English-only education. They can show their skills, e.g. technology, even if not getting good grades in school.

Bilingual staff

Bilingual staffing, especially helpful to students from homes where English is not spoken.

For many, the HWC provides access to help that cannot be gotten at home (language, familiarity with homework or U.S. school expectations).

One-on-one help, individual needs addressed

One-to-one help with homework, something not always received at school, repeated help if needed. Teachers can be distracted, not able to explain repeatedly.

Help children identify what they need help with, e.g., when need repeated explanations.

Volunteers from California State University, Monterey Bay that give students specific help with computers.

Because they see students regularly, homework center coordinators have identified children with special needs, and communicated this to parents.

Parents note the success of their children when they come to the homework center, e.g., student who did less well when switched to after school program from homework center; A's dropped to B's; parent now returning child to homework center.

C. Relationships develop between students and between students and HWC coordinators

Friends are made at the HWC between children who may not be friends in school, e.g., often see of children of different ages working together. Also, a more diverse group of kids come to the homework center than are in the social network of home schooled students.

Regular, consistent, individual attention children receive develops into a relationship between homework center coordinator and student. Students feel good when they experience success and are able to share it with the homework center coordinator.

Children learn manners, social skills.

D. How HWC's support the library

In depth attention for individual students, that might not be able to get in library, because of other demands on staff time.

The HWC introduces children to library who might not ordinarily come there; at some centers, the majority of HWC kids wouldn't come to the library otherwise.

Puts additional staff power at library.

E. Other

It provides an opportunity for community service, some of which is formal, e.g. from probation department or high school community service requirements, some informal, e.g. when students have extra time while there.

It is free. This is unexpected for some parents.

It is the best secret in the county, in some areas. In others, it is well known, and success can be a potential problem.

II. Examples of students who have benefited from the program

| Child | Grade | Benefit of homework center participation |
|-------|-------|---|
| KP | 4 | Didn't like to read; saw HWC coordinator read, asked about it, learned that reading is fun, can pick books she likes, they read together, she's become an avid reader. |
| SS | 3 | No one to help who had patience; came with many papers for help, twice last year, now daily. Has improved grades, also identified that he needed additional reading help, completes homework regularly |
| JB | 2 | Foster child, has brothers and cousins at home who are very disruptive, at HWC is learning social skills |
| GT | 5 | Better grades, reading much more, enjoying reading |
| CS | 10 | Problems with geometry, came daily but still failed. Frustrated with teacher. Confidence to go to guidance counselor, to negotiate for self in school, changed classes--new teacher, went from F to A. |
| MZ | 4 | Began in second grade, tagging along with older sister who had been referred by teacher. She sat in the back for the first year. Now she has just become more socially open, walks in with confidence; she has just blossomed. |
| AB | 7 | Was coming every day and doing homework, received a deficiency notice, coordinator thought it was unreasonable, discussed how to talk with teacher, have parents talk to teacher. This was new for her and her parents--questioning school authorities, advocate for self in school. She resolved it herself, meeting with the teacher. |

Examples of students who have benefited from the program (con't.)

| Child | Grade | Benefit of homework center participation |
|-------|---------|--|
| RK | College | Came to U.S., spoke no English, took 1 year of classes in Spanish, then second in English, in preparation for college. Spent lots of time in HWC to do this. |
| XG | HS | Came from a country in Asia, needed HWC desperately to learn how to do everything. Now has made the transition to U.S. school system. |
| NR | 4 | Having trouble finishing homework; teacher told HWC coordinator that she's recommending HWC to parents at parent-teacher conference. |
| HA | 2 | HWC next door to school, when kids arrive, they have had enough school for the day, tired. This child comes to the HWC and sets own personal record for reading, how much he can read in an afternoon. |

III. What does your homework center do best?

- Support library use among young people through encouraging, supporting and accepting the kids.
- Teaching skills missed in school, e.g. etiquette, manners.
- Different ways of teaching and different ways to learn how to do homework.
- One-on-one attention.
- Patience.
- We respect children.
- Teaching and creating a learning environment.
- Tutoring (one-on-one), socializing, stimulating.
- Support for school report research, e.g. showing them print resources, staff know what projects the school will be assigning and has materials ready.

IV. How could your homework center program be better?

Homework center coordinators had many and varied suggestions, including:

Access:

- Location - kids must cross bridge to get there, access for kids from school, parents don't want them to cross bridge.
- Shuttle bus to take kids home or to the library at night.
- High school site may be intimidating for some younger kids.
- Neighborhood access.

Publicity:

- More publicity or better publicity, examples: news articles, increase word-of-mouth publicity, give kids a "finder's fee" or prize (e.g. school supplies) for bringing others to the center.
- Accuracy of media reporting important, e.g. hours
- Some centers need no more publicity, are at/reaching capacity, in part related to longevity of site.
- School advertising (brochures, etc.) not always successful
 - lack of response noted for some
 - Too many schools/teachers to advertise to effectively

- teachers have responded to advertising by sending students who have severe academic problems that the homework center is not able to address.

Facility:

- Need for larger facility, more hours at some sites.
- Safety issues: kids must eat outside, in parking lot of strip mall.

Staffing:

- Another paid staff person during peak hours.
 - Could pay a high school student to help
- Difficulties with volunteers
 - Not all felt volunteers could provide needed staffing because of own interests, ability to stay around, etc.
 - Odd hours, down time
 - Community service is a short-term commitment for most students.

Additional activities:

- Something to do other than school work.
 - Checkers, chess, games.
 - Scrabble, anagrams
 - Coloring
 - Games, crafts.
- Monthly programs? Maybe yes at some centers.
- College students reading with younger students.

Ways for students to take ownership, leadership roles at the library

- Youth Advisory Committee: discuss library problems, plans for library
- Implementing young people's ideas

Safety:

- Getting feedback from kids about their safety concerns, both future issues (moving library) and current
- Access
- Bullies
- Eating outside (see above)

Supplies

- Craft supplies and ideas
- Pencils, paper

Administrative issues

- More regular meetings; dialogue among the coordinators
- Praise, feedback for what HWC's are doing
- Newsletter

More adults in library during homework time

- Role models, not only working directly with kids, needs more balance
- Complaints from adults about kids, noise
- Bridge between adult users and child users

- Encouragement of adults, family to come during the HWC hours

College students

- Not "counted" as HWC users
- Need to consider including them in census; they are good role models, often don't need a lot of help, new to doing research, need the help.

Math master texts:

- Would be a great help for coordinators to have these
- Teachers may have issues about these being used at homework centers

Homework Center Observations

While the homework centers varied a good deal in terms of how busy they were, they had in common an atmosphere of engaged involvement between homework center coordinators and students. The following descriptions include both "macro" and "micro" characteristics of the homework centers, all of which contribute to their functioning. They include features the centers have in common as well as individual differences among the centers.

I. Geographic location of library

The location of the libraries and their accessibility in relation to local schools and the center of town influenced the number of students who used the center as well as when it was used, and how it was used by students.

At least two of the centers that were experiencing a low census were located in libraries that were situated at a distance from the local elementary school; in one case, students had to walk across an overpass over the highway to reach the center from the school. Two centers were situated very close or next-door to a local elementary school. The students came to the centers immediately after school. Often this meant that the students were not ready to do homework when they arrived. They needed time to "decompress" and it was mentioned by both students and one of the coordinators that they would like to see the center provide something else to do, e.g., games, so the students could settle a bit before starting homework.

Students seemed to do a good deal of wandering in and out of the library in centers that were situated in shopping malls or near "quick stop" stores, in part because eating is not allowed in the library and especially because snacks are available at the stores. There did not seem to be a lot of concern about this, although it appeared to contribute to a high level of physical activity and distraction at times.

One library branch was located at a school bus stop. When the bus stopped there, the library and homework center was overrun with students, many of whom used the library as a place to meet their parents for a ride home. As with the centers next-door to schools, many of the students who arrived at the library off the bus were not there to study and had lots of energy to expend, occasionally creating discipline problems for the librarians.

II. Location of Homework Center within the Library

About half of the libraries had a separate room that was designated the homework center. In several cases, busy homework centers were located in small libraries with no separation between homework center and library proper. One of the busiest centers had a designated room, but students "spilled over" into all parts of the library and the courtyard outside. On the day I visited the homework center room did not accommodate all the students and children were spread throughout the library. In smaller libraries with busy homework centers, the students "took over" the library. At some observations I saw few or no adults other than the librarians during homework center hours and was told that some patrons avoided the library during the homework center.

III. Dynamics of staff-student interactions

The coordinators all knew most of the students who arrived at the homework centers during my observations. They greeted them by name and were likewise greeted by the students personally. During my interviews with students, it was rare for a student not to be able to indicate the coordinator by name as someone who could be asked for help. One coordinator carried the homework center sign-in sheet with her and walked through the library during homework center hours. She greeted each student and signed her/him in herself. This had the advantages of keeping the sign-in list accurate--there were many students at the center each day--and gave her the opportunity to welcome each student to the library.

In general, daily homework help seemed to be the responsibility of coordinators and volunteers. The library staff usually assisted with looking up material or using library resources rather than daily homework assignments. However, doing school reports--and getting help with this--was a major activity at most of the centers and seemed to involve a fairly significant amount of library staff time. Particularly in busy centers, students turned freely to any library staff person for whatever they needed, from homework help to negotiating the use of the computers.

The time coordinators and other library staff had to spend helping individual students naturally varied as a function of how busy the centers were. One of the potential benefits of a center being busy was that the coordinators often asked one student to help another student with their questions, giving students the opportunity to develop reciprocal learning skills. On the other hand, at centers with fewer students the coordinators provided extensive individual assistance with homework for those who attended.

Assistance was provided in many centers in both English and Spanish. All of the branches in communities with large Spanish-speaking populations had coordinators and/or staff who were fluently bilingual. These centers had many students who were not fluent in English and had instruction and homework assignments entirely English-based. The homework centers were important scaffolds to these students' transition to English-only classrooms.

IV. Overcrowding/noise

The centers that had a large census and those that were situated close to neighborhood schools or bus stops appeared to have a large proportion of students who came because the center was a safe place to "hang out" after school, and for whom doing homework was secondary. Sometimes this caused problems; the homework center was too noisy (by all accounts), and students who were studying complained that it was hard to concentrate with all of the activity going on. Students who were not at the library to study often wandered in and out of the library and homework center, particularly if there were a store nearby where they could buy food. Both the traffic in and out of the library and the food students brought into the library were disruptions the staff had to manage. There had been one incident at one center when a student who was not at the library to study approached and started a fight with another student, but this was a single event. It was discussed by the student leadership group and library staff and the branch librarian enlisted the help of the neighborhood police station to have officers visit the library during homework center hours on occasion. While dealing with disciplinary issues was a regular task, library staff did not appear to be overwhelmed by discipline problems.

VI. Computers

Rarely during my observations did I see a computer stand idle for any period of time. Clearly the computers were a magnet drawing students to the homework centers and the library

more generally. The computer sign-in systems in place--though on occasion demanding a fair amount of coordinators' or staff attention--seemed to serve to organize computer use by students. Most branches appeared to have a sufficient number of computers, but the branches with the largest censuses could easily put to use more.

VII. Volunteers

I observed relatively few volunteers or parents at the homework centers, however, when they were present, they were welcomed and busy. One branch had had a volunteer tutoring program as part of its original homework center and continued to have regular volunteers. At one homework center the library staff were looking for ways to encourage parents to visit and work with their children there. A parent from another branch indicated that she felt she was able to spend "quality time" with her child when she came with him to the center.

Participant Census

The homework center census yielded information about the pattern of homework center usage at each library and with it we were able to answer the following questions:

- How many individual students visited each homework center in May?
- What was the total number of visits made to each homework center in May?
- How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center in May?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student in May?
- How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of students at the HWC each day?
- What was the average grade level of students who came to the homework center?

A table reporting the values for each of the questions listed above for each homework center appears in Appendix G.

I. Numbers of students and numbers of visits

Overall, 569 students visited the 9 homework centers in the month of May. They made a total of 1,241 visits. Individual students came to the homework centers from 1 to 15 times that month. Homework centers varied a good deal in the average number of visits made per month by children, from 2 visits on average at Aromas, Gonzales, and Greenfield to 9 visits on average at the Prunedale homework center. In addition to average values, it is possible to analyze other patterns of use not presented on the table. For example, half of the 240 students who came to the Castroville homework center (52%) came one time only in the month of May. The largest number of students to visit one homework center on one day was May 3rd, when 57 students visited the Castroville homework center. The pattern of use can also be compared for two centers that have the same or similar numbers of total visits. For example, Castroville and Carmel Valley had 594 and 595 total visits respectively. However, these were made by 108 students averaging 6 visits in May in Carmel Valley and 241 students averaging 3 visits in May in Castroville.

II. Students' grade levels

Students who attended the centers ranged in age from first grade through 12th, although students in the 4th through 8th grades predominated. The average age of students who used the homework centers varied by center. The average grade level of homework center users at the Carmel Valley libraries was 4th grade, while 8th grade was the average age of participants at both the Castroville and the King City Libraries. It was also possible to determine the grade level breakdown for all students coming to a center. For example, at the Castroville homework center 4% of the students were in 1st through 3rd grades; 17% were in 4th and 5th grade; 43% were in 6th through 8th grade; and 34% were in high school. (not on table)

III. How this type of data can be put to use:

These data can be used to inform a number of different issues, for example, to support hiring additional homework center staff or to extend a homework center's hours or to guide the purchase of resource materials for students at particular grade levels.

If data were collected over a period of time, or at two time points, for example, before and after a publicity campaign, the data could be used to measure the success--in terms of increased utilization--of such a campaign.

It was also possible to compare the number of students who completed the student surveys and their grade levels to determine how representative the sample of students completing the surveys was in comparison with those who used the center regularly.

IV. Seaside Branch Five-Month Census

The Seaside Branch homework center census yielded information about the pattern of homework center usage at the Seaside branch library over a five-month period and with it we were able to answer the following questions:

- How many individual students visited the homework center each month and over the five months?
- What was the total number of visits made to the homework center each month and over the five months?
- How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center in each month and over the five months?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student?
- How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day?
- What was the least-to-most range in number of students at the HWC each day?
- What was the average grade level of students who came to the homework center?

A table reporting the values for each of the questions listed above for each month at the Seaside homework center is found in Appendix H.

A. Numbers of students and numbers of visits

Overall, 132 students visited the Seaside Branch homework center between January and May, 2002. They made a total of 1,219 visits. Individual students came to the homework centers from 1 to 61 times during those five months and the average number of visits per child was 9. Elementary school students averaged 12 visits during this period, middle schoolers averaged 8 visits, and high schoolers averaged 6 visits. Twenty-five percent of the students came to the homework center one time only. Sixty percent made between 2 and 15 visits each and 15% came to the homework center at least once a week on average, i.e. 17 visits or more. The number of students studying in the homework center each day ranged from 9 to 30 and averaged 19 students.

B. Students' grade levels

Among those attending the homework center, 44% were in Elementary School, 35% were in Middle School and 21% were in High School. The average grade level of the students was the sixth grade.

C. Feasibility of collecting these data

These census data provide an accurate picture of the pattern of utilization of the homework centers, yielding both information about numbers of individuals as well as visits to the homework centers. The data collected were very simple: name, grade, and notation of attendance on a given day, but analyzed, the data yield many different pieces of information. With sufficient

technological support, this kind of data collection could readily enhance the descriptive information available about the homework centers. However, it is cumbersome and time-consuming for coordinators to transpose information from paper-and-pencil sign-in sheets to a daily census database. There are multiple models of systems that have participants sign in on a computerized database, but all require a computer dedicated to collecting this information, i.e., not available for general use. Currently, this is not an option at any of the homework centers. The coordinator who collected the data for the Seaside branch, Karma Simmons, noted that if she used a "roll sheet" instead of a daily sign-in sheet, the information would be more easily transposable to the database, possibly by a volunteer on a regular basis. This may be the best intermediate option for such a system of collecting census information.

IV. CONCLUSION

This evaluation examined the benefits students gained through their participation in the homework center program of the Monterey County Free Libraries. Data were collected from the student participants, library staff, parents, and students in two neighboring schools and observations were made at the libraries during homework center hours. Evidence supporting positive outcomes for students at the homework center included:

Student participants at the homework centers developed effective study skills

- The majority of students indicated they were able to perform basic library research activities.
- Students who had been coming to the homework center for two years or more were also more likely to know how to perform "advanced" library research activities.
- Both parents and students reported that studying at the homework center had helped the students in school.
- Coordinators reported that students gained confidence about asking questions, working with others, and learning how to advocate for themselves in school as a result of coming to the homework center.
- During the homework center observations, students were actively working together and helping each other with their assignments and reports.
- Among the fifth graders surveyed at a local elementary school, students who studied at the homework center were more likely to report that others asked them for help with homework than those who did not.

Student participants at the homework centers become active library patrons

- Over half the students who studied at the homework center also used the library at other times, had introduced another person to the library, and had spent at least some of their time there reading "just for fun."

Student participants at the homework centers become role models for other students

- In addition to helping others with homework and introducing fellow students to the homework center, a third of the students had helped out when asked by the librarians and at one branch served as youth advisors to the library.
- Two students had taken on the job of homework center coordinator while still in high school.
- The longer students had been coming to the homework center the more likely they were to help out when asked or to bring another student to the homework center.

Homework Center Process: Successes and Improvements

The most important measure of success of the homework center program was the positive outcomes for the student participants. A secondary indicator of success was the number of students who choose to study at the homework center. Multiple factors contributed to each of these kinds of success.

The most important contributor to the participant outcomes at the homework center was the homework center coordinator. At all of the branches, one-on-one assistance for students doing their homework was the core feature of the service provided by the centers. Students, parents, and library staff all cited the coordinators as central to student outcomes and to the success of the homework centers. Other adults contributed at several branches. These included volunteers, a few parents, and many of the branch librarians and other library staff. The assistance provided students with daily homework and school reports contributed instrumentally to their successful completion of schoolwork. Equally important, the coordinators and other adults provided a safe, supportive environment for the students. The coordinators, in particular, developed relationships with the students, who responded frequently by sharing their school successes with them.

This close, one-on-one interaction was characteristic of all of the coordinators' work with students. Additionally, homework center coordinators were responsible for encouraging students to work with each other. The coordinators often fostered collaboration between students, both when the centers were too busy for them to help all the students or when students had their own knowledge and expertise to share. In several branches, the coordinators had added other dimensions to their role. At several branches they also coordinated the work of the volunteers. At the largest homework center, the coordinator had also created a youth advisory committee and a computer-sharing program.

Additional resources that were common to all branches were the computers, books and other print materials. Students named the computers as one of the top three reasons for coming to the homework centers and even when restricted to "homework only" use, the computers were almost never idle. At several sites, library staff were aware of the kinds of print material students would need for school reports throughout the year and efforts had been made to obtain them.

Simply using number of participants as an indicator of a center's success is problematic. The number of students who studied at each homework center--whether the census was very high or very low--had to do with a number of factors unrelated to interaction between library staff and students or even branch size and center capacity. Branches varied greatly in the number of students who attended; the May 2001 census showed a range from five students making a total of 26 visits at one branch to over 200 students making nearly 600 visits at another. The primary factors associated with variation in census had to do with geography and other external characteristics of the communities in which the homework centers were located. The proximity of a homework center to a local school or a school bus stop contributed to the number of students because they included both students wanting to study and those who needed a safe place to be after school. By the same token, library branches located at a distance from the local schools did not draw students for whom walking was their only mode of transportation. The number of schools the center served also contributed to the number of students who came to many of the centers. Several centers had experienced a drop in census in the preceding two years when many schools, particularly in rural areas, had received grants to operate after school programs.

Several characteristics of the branches themselves also appeared to contribute to a branch's homework center success. The number of years of a center's operation, and the consistency over time of homework center staffing was related to how many students used the center. In addition, the relationship between the homework center and the library branch as a whole appeared to be related in several cases to the center's success. At several branches with busy centers, the relationship between the branch librarian and the homework center coordinator clearly fostered the growth and development of the center. In contrast, in two centers with low

student attendance, the coordinators and librarians both had concerns about this, but did not appear to have addressed them together.

Centers with a large census had unique challenges to do with the branch's capacity to accommodate the number of children who came to the library after school. These included noise and disruption of library service, both to the students and to other library patrons, accessibility of computers, as well as monitoring and responding to actual behavior problems among student users. In several instances serious consideration had been given to restricting number of students who were able to use the homework center.

The homework centers have a great deal in common--a shared philosophy, core activities, and desired outcomes for students. At the same time there are large differences among the branches--most having to do with the size of the homework center user population. Recommendations arising from this evaluation study hinge on these two features.

- Communication among homework center coordinators needs to be regular.
- Administration should facilitate discussion between the branch librarian and the homework center coordinator in branches, particularly where there are issues of overcrowding or underutilization.
- At branches with a very high census: Consider hiring another homework center staff person to assist the homework center coordinator, increasing the number of days the center is open, or the number of hours it operates each day.
- At branches with a very low census: Examine carefully the contributing factors. Are they outside the branch's control?
- Publicity: Consider that student-to-student, word-of-mouth publicity is responsible for a large portion of current attendance.
- The information contained in this report needs to be shared with library and homework center staff.

APPENDIX A

Student Participant Survey

MCFL Homework Center User Survey Spring 2001

What grade are you in? _____ What school do you go to? _____

1. How often do you come to the homework center? (circle one)

Most/all the days
it is open

About once
a week

A couple of times
a month

Once a month
or less

2. What grade were you in when you first came to the homework center? _____

3. Who first told you or how did you first hear about the homework center at the library?

4. Have you ever brought *another student* to the *homework center* for their first time? (circle) Yes No

5. Have you ever brought *anyone* to the *library* for their first time? (circle) Yes No

6. Here is a list of things people do at the homework center. Which ones do you do? (Put an X in the box.)

| <u>Activity</u> | <u>I do this a lot</u> | <u>I do this some</u> | <u>I don't do this</u> |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Get help with homework | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Help other students with their homework | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Look things up/do research for school reports or projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Get help with school reports or projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Work with other students on school projects | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Read for fun | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use computers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visit with friends | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. If you get help at the homework center, who helps you? Circle all who help.

HWC Coordinator Library Staff HWC Volunteers Other students Parents/family

8. If you get help at the homework center, do you always get the help you need? Circle the best answer

Almost always Most of the time Some of the time Almost never

9. Do you go anywhere else for homework help? (Circle) Yes No If yes, where?

10. Do you get homework help from anyone in your family? Often Sometimes No

11. How often do you do your homework at the library HWC and how often at home? (Circle)

Most often at
Homework Center

About
half and half

Most often
at Home

12. Do you usually finish your homework when you do it at the library homework center?

Almost always Most of the time Some of the time Almost never

13. How difficult would you say your homework is?

Often/most subjects difficult Sometimes/some subjects difficult Never difficult

14. Do you think coming to the homework center at the library has helped you in school? Yes No

If yes, how?

15. Do you think coming to the homework center makes doing homework more fun? Yes No

16. Are your grades better because you come to the homework center?

Yes, a lot better Yes, a little better No

17. Do you ever come to the library when the homework center is not open? E.g., on Saturday Yes No

18. Do you ever check out books for fun, just to read on your own?

Often Sometimes No

19. Here is a list of things people do at the library. Which of these things do you know how to do?
(Mark boxes with an X.)

| | I can do this on my own | I can do this with help | I don't know how |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Look up information for school reports in books | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Look up information for school reports on the internet | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Use the library catalogue | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Find books on the shelves | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Know how to check out a book | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Know who to ask for help | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Know how to get books that are not in this library | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

20. Do you ever help the library staff when you are at the homework center?

Often Sometimes No

21. What do you like best about coming to the homework center at the library?

22. Is there anything you don't like about the homework center?

23. Is there anything that would make the Homework Center a better place for you?

APPENDIX B

Student Pre and Post Survey

Student Questionnaire about Homework

Thank you for answering these questions about homework. There are no right answers, we are interested in what you think about homework! Please answer all the questions honestly.

In each group of statements, please mark X over the one that is true for you.

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1. I can do all of my homework without help. _____ | I can do most of my homework without help. _____ | I can do some of my homework without help. _____ | I need help with most of my homework. _____ |
| 2. I usually do not finish my homework. _____ | I sometimes do not finish my homework. _____ | I finish my homework most of the time. _____ | I finish my homework all of the time. _____ |
| 3. My homework is always easy to do. _____ | My homework is easy to do most of the time. _____ | My homework is easy to do some of the time. _____ | My homework is never easy to do. _____ |
| 4. I can rarely answer homework questions that other students don't understand. _____ | I can sometimes answer homework questions other students don't understand. _____ | I can usually answer homework questions other students don't understand. _____ | I can always answer homework questions other students don't understand. _____ |
| 5. My homework is always interesting to do. _____ | My homework is interesting to do most of the time. _____ | My homework is interesting to do some of the time. _____ | My homework is never interesting to do. _____ |
| 6. I am never asked for help with homework. _____ | I am sometimes asked for help with homework. _____ | I am often asked for help with homework. _____ | I am always asked for help with homework. _____ |
| 7. My friends think that homework is always easy to do. _____ | My friends think that homework is easy to do most of the time. _____ | My friends think that homework is easy to do some of the time. _____ | My friends think that homework is never easy to do. _____ |
| 8. I always have trouble understanding my homework. _____ | I often have trouble understanding my homework. _____ | I sometimes have trouble understanding my homework. _____ | I never have trouble understanding my homework. _____ |
| 9. Where do you do your homework? (Please put an X in a box for each place) | | | |
| a. During school time (e.g. recess) | Never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. At an after school program at school | Never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. At the library homework center | Never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. At home | Never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. At a friend's house | Never <input type="checkbox"/> | Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> | Often <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Where do you get help with homework most often? _____

We would like to ask you what you think about homework at the end of the year, to see if things have changed. In order to compare your answers today with your end-of-the-year answers we need to know your name. Your first name and last initial is enough. Thanks!

Name _____

APPENDIX C

Library Staff Survey

Homework Center Survey for MCFL Branch Library Staff -Spring 2001

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. This survey is a part of an evaluation of the MCFL Homework Center Program. A summary of responses to this survey will be prepared and shared with both the library administration and library staff. The report will not identify the source of specific comments. Your honest feedback is very much appreciated!

1. Your Branch? _____

2. Your position? _____

3. How successful do you think the homework center at your branch is? (Circle one)

Outstanding **Very** **Moderately** **Somewhat** **Not Very**

3a. Is there anything that should be done to improve the homework center at your branch?

3b. What are the most important factors that make your branch's homework center successful?

4. How disruptive is the homework center to your library's daily functioning? (Circle one)

Very **Moderate** **Somewhat** **Not at all**

4a. What is most disruptive about the homework center? (e.g. it draws library staff away from other work/patrons, the noise level in the library, space)

4b. What do you think can/should be done about these disruptions?

5. How much does the homework center add to your workload? (Circle one.)

A great deal **Moderately** **A little** **Very little**

Comments?

16. How often do library patrons ask your HWC coordinator **reference questions**? Frequently Occasionally Rarely I Don't know

17. How often does your HWC coordinator refer questions to you? Frequently Occasionally Rarely

18. How important a service do you think the Homework Center program is in your library? (Circle)
Very Moderately Somewhat Not at all

19. Do you see specific development(s) in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors in the students who use your homework center? Yes No
17a. If **Yes**, please describe:

20. Are there any additional resources you think the homework center at your branch needs? (Please check any/all and note specific needs make other suggestions below.)

- X Specific suggestions:
- Reference materials
- Computer equipment
- Personnel/volunteers
- Printing for HWC users
- Programs or Activities for HWC
- Specialized training for staff (e.g computer research)

21. Have you received particular feedback about the homework center that you would like to share?

22. Are there any specific issue(s) that were not addressed in these general questions that you wish to have addressed by the Homework Center Program manager?

APPENDIX D

Homework Center Coordinators Survey

HWC Coordinators Survey -Spring 2001

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Your responses will be part of an overall evaluation of the MCFL Homework Center Program. This survey addresses procedures and administrative issues principally. Space is left for your comments and suggestions and *all are appreciated!*

1. At which branch do you work? _____

2. How successful do you think the homework center at your branch is? (Circle one)

Outstanding

Very

Moderately

Somewhat

Not Very

3. Is there anything that should be done to improve the homework center at your branch? (e.g. space, hours, personnel, materials, publicity)

4. Is the Homework Center open enough hours

4a. to meet your needs?

Yes No

4b. to meet the needs of your branch's patrons?

Yes No

5. Has the homework center at your branch reached its capacity as it is currently set up?

Yes No

5a. **If yes**, Is there a need in your community or among your patrons for the homework center at your branch to provide service to more children?

Yes No

6. Would you like to see your homework center provide services to more children than it currently does?

Yes No

6a. Why or why not?

7. Are the students at your homework center able to pay for copying?

Yes No

7a. **If no**, do you have any suggestions for this?

8. Are the students at your homework center able to get the access they need to computers?

Yes No

8a. **If no**, do you have any suggestions to help increase access for students?

9. Do you need any particular support materials for students? Yes No
9a. **If yes**, what are these?

10. Would you like to have monthly programs at your HWC for children and their parents (e.g., study habits, financial aid workshops)? Yes No
10a. **If yes**, what kinds of programs would you like to have?

11. Is the homework center well-integrated into your branch? Very Acceptably Not

12. Do you think there should be either **more** or **less** involvement with the management of the HWC at the branch level? More Less As is

13. Do you think there should be either **more** or **less** involvement with the management of the HWC at the administrative offices level? More Less As is

14. Is it clear to you who your supervisor is? Yes No
14a. Do you get enough support from your supervisor? Yes No

14b. Would you like to have regular evaluations of your work? Yes No

15. Are you satisfied with your position? **(Circle one)**
Very **Moderately** **Somewhat** **Not Very**

16. What could be done to make your job more satisfying?

17. Do you work in any other capacity at the library besides your position as HWC Coordinator? Yes No

17a. **If yes**, does this experience enhance your ability to provide homework center assistance? **If yes**, how? Yes No

APPENDIX E

Parent Permission for Pre and Post Survey (Spanish)

MCFL Centro de Tareas Escolares – Encuesta para Padres
Primavera 2001

Estimados Padres,

Esta primavera la biblioteca del condado de Monterey esta haciendo una encuesta para evaluar el programa del Centro de Tareas Escolares. Le agradeceríamos mucho que tomara unos minutos para contestar estas preguntas. Su respuestas son muy importantes para la biblioteca. Gracias!

En que grado esta su niño/niña? _____

1. La siguiente lista contiene algunas de las razones por las cuales los padres quieren que sus hijos vengan al centro de tareas en la biblioteca despues de la escuela. Nos gustaría saber si algunas de estas son razones son las suyas.

Por favor marque todas las que sean verdaderas para Usted.

- _____ a. Es un lugar seguro para que mi niño/niña pase el tiempo despues de la escuela.
- _____ b. Es conveniente, por ejemplo., esta cerca de la escuela ó esta cerca de la casa.
- _____ c. Mi niño/niña recibe ayuda con su tarea.
- _____ d. Mi niño/niña termina su tarea cuando viene aquí.
- _____ e. Mi niño/ niña aprende a usar la biblioteca cuando viene al centro de tareas.
- _____ f. Mi niño/niña lee más cuando viene al centro de tareas.
- _____ g. Mi niño/niña pasa tiempo con sus amigos aquí.
- _____ h. Mi niño/niña se familiariza con el personal de la biblioteca.
- _____ i. Otras razones (por favor diganos)

2. Cuál de las razones indicadas arriba es la más importante para Usted para que su niño/niña use el centro de tareas en la biblioteca? (Ponga la _____ letra correspondiente)

3. El venir al centro de tareas ha ayudado a su niño/niña en la escuela? Si, Mucho Si, Algo No, Realmente No se
4. El venir al centro de tareas ha ayudado a su niño/niña a leer mejor? Si, Mucho Si, Algo No, Realmente No se
5. Participa su niño/niña en algún otro programa despues de la escuela? Si No
Si la respuesta es Si, recibe su niño/niña del centro de tareas en la biblioteca algo que no recibe de otro programa? (Por favor diganos)

6. Hay algo que Usted cree que debería ser cambiado (o agregado) para hacer el venir a este centro una mayor experiencia para su niño/niña?

Octubre 27, 2001

Estimado Padre/Madre/Guardián:

La clase de su niño/a ha sido seleccionada para participar en una encuesta conducida por la Biblioteca Gratis del Condado de Monterey como parte de una evaluación del programa Centro de Tareas de la biblioteca. Nos interesa saber la actitud de los niños hacia su tarea, que recursos utilizan o les gustaría utilizar para hacer la tarea, y si hay o no hay cambios durante el año escolar. La información que obtengamos será de mucha ayuda para el personal de la biblioteca y de la escuela quienes ayudan a los estudiantes.

Los estudiantes en la clase de su niño/a completarán la encuesta con preguntas acerca de como se sienten con su tarea donde y con quién van si necesitan ayuda con la tarea. La encuesta toma como 10 minutos y será completada la próxima semana y al fin del año escolar. La encuesta es confidencial. Las respuestas de estudiantes no serán identificadas individualmente en ningún reporte.

Quisieramos su permiso para incluir a su niño/a en esta encuesta. Si Usted esta dispuesto a permitir que su niño/a participe, no necesita hacer nada. Todos los estudiantes dispuestos a participar serán incluidos a menos que sus padres nos avisen que no desean hacerlo. Si Usted no quiere que su niño/a participe en la encuesta, por favor firme y regrese esta forma.

Si tiene cualquier pregunta o le gustaría saber los resultados del estudio, por favor hable con el maestro/a de su niño/a o llame a la señora Jane Brown al número 626-0457.

Gracias,

Jane Brown, Consultante de Evaluación para la Biblioteca Gratis del Condado de Monterey

Padre/Guardián Negación de Permiso

SI NO DESEA QUE SU NIÑO/A PARTICIPE EN LA ENCUESTA, POR FAVOR COMPLETE ESTA FORMA Y REGRESELA AL MAESTRO/A DE SU NIÑO/A DENTRO DE TRES DÍAS. GRACIAS.

Yo no estoy de acuerdo en permitir que mi niño/a, _____, participe en la encuesta para el estudio del Centro de Tareas de la Biblioteca Gratis del Condado de Monterey.

Nombre de Padre/Madre _____

Firma, _____

Fecha _____

APPENDIX F

Participant Outcomes and Indicators

MCFL Homework centers evaluation
Participant Outcomes and Indicators

| Outcome | Indicator (s) |
|--|---|
| <p>Participants using the homework centers regularly develop effective study skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they complete homework on-time, regularly • they learn to assess their own needs for assistance and to ask for help when needed; feel confident asking any question • they develop the library research skills they need for class assignments • they demonstrate confidence in their abilities to do homework • they learn to work with others | <p>More than 50% of students sampled who have participated regularly at the homework center for at least 6 months will demonstrate listed study skills, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self report • Parent report |
| <p>Participants using the homework centers become active library patrons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they develop relationships with library staff, understand their respective roles • they introduce friends and family to library and its services • they use library services beyond the homework center (to read and check out books, use computers, etc.) • they assist librarians in day-to-day tasks of the library and HWC(e.g., reshelving books, reading to other children) • they take on leadership roles representing youth at the library (e.g. participation on Youth Advisory Committee) | <p>More than 50% of students sampled who have participated regularly in homework centers for at least six months will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use library services other than HWC • be able to identify respective roles of staff • introduce others to library <p>10% or more of students sampled who have participated in homework centers for at least six months will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take on leadership roles or assist at library |
| <p>Participants become successful role models for their fellow students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are able to help other students with homework questions • they introduce friends and family to the homework center | <p>25% or more of students sampled who have participated regularly in homework centers for at least six months will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help others with homework • introduce others to library HWC |

APPENDIX G

Census Report Table May 2001

May 2001-Census Report Table

| | Aromas | Carmel Valley | Castroville | Gonzales | Greenfield | King City | Marina | Prunedale | Soledad |
|---|--------|---------------|-------------|----------|------------------|-----------|--------|-----------|---------|
| How many days was the Homework center open in May? ¹ | 10 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| How many students visited the homework center in May? | 75 | 108 | 241 | 11 | 59 | 23 | 29 | 18 | 5 |
| How many total visits were made in May? | 145 | 595 | 594 | 24 | 94 | 88 | 86 | 157 | 26 |
| How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center in May? | 2 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 5 |
| What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student in May? | 1-8 | 1-17 | 1-15 | 1-7 | 1-9 | 1-10 | 1-10 | 3-12 | 1-10 |
| How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day? | 14 | 33 | 40 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 12 | 2 |
| What was the least-to-most range in number of students who came to the WC each day? | 6-23 | 21-49 | 23-57 | 1-5 | 4-17 | 3-16 | 3-11 | 6-16 | 1-4 |
| What was the average grade of the students who came to the homework center? | 5th | 4th | 8th | 5th | 7th ^b | 8th | 5th | 6th | 5th |

Note: Only days with attendance of 1 or more are included in the count of "open" days.

Note. Data from the Seaside Branch were not available. Data from the Seaside branch homework center were collected from January through may 2002.

APPENDIX H

Census Report Table - Seaside January-May 2002

Census Table - Seaside Branch January-May 2002

| | January | February | March | April | May | Total Jan-May |
|---|---------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|
| How many days was the Homework center open? ¹ | 13 | 13 | 8 | 16 | 17 | 67 |
| How many students visited the homework center ? | 73 | 68 | 53 | 54 | 75 | 132 |
| How many total visits were made? | 265 | 253 | 139 | 263 | 299 | 1,219 |
| How many visits--on average--did each student make to the homework center? | 3.6 | 3.7 | 2.6 | 4.9 | 4.0 | 9.0 |
| What was the least-to-most range in number of visits per student? | 1-13 | 1-13 | 1-7 | 1-14 | 1-17 | 1-61 ² |
| How many students--on average--came to the homework center each day? | 21 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 19 |
| What was the least-to-most range in number of students who came to the WC each day? | 11-28 | 12-25 | 13-21 | 9-28 | 13-30 | 9-30 |
| What was the average grade of the students who came to the homework center? | 6th | 6th | 6th | 6th | 6th | 6th ³ |

Note: Only days with attendance of 1 or more are included in the count of "open" days.

Note. 25% of students made 1 visit during these 5 months; 60% made between 2 and 15 visits each; and 15% came to the homework center at least once a week on average (17 or more visits).

²Percentage of students in each age range: Elementary (1-5)=44%, Middle School (6-8)=35%, High School (9-12)=21%.

³Average number of days attended homework center between January and May: Elementary schoolers:12; Middle schoolers:8; High schoolers:6.