A Study of Some of the Ways that Homework is Used in a School System and an Evaluation of its Possible Value

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A STUDY OF SOME OF THE WAYS THAT
HOMEWORK IS USED IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM
AND AN EVALUATION OF ITS POSSIBLE VALUE

by

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Gary Charles Rosenthal
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CHAPTER I

SHOULD HOMEWORK BE GIVEN

When reviewing the literature on homework, it was noticed that the research done in this important area was distressingly vague. In fact, the literature on homework is paradoxical. Some articles present evidence that homework is a positive factor in learning, while other articles based on apparently equally valid research indicate that children are not helped through homework, and in some cases it is shown as being a deterrent to learning. Consequently, if one attempted to justify a stand on the desirability of homework by articles written and research reported, he would become very much confused. This degree of fuzziness, however, is quite ironic, if not tragic, in view of the fact that millions of hours are spent by students and by parents each year in completing homework assignments and in view of the long span of years over which homework has been a standard part of the educational routine. Furthermore, if one considers the fact that there are roughly 180 days in a school year, and that each day more and more homework is assigned, perhaps it is about time that someone really finds out if all this homework does any good.

If one looks at all the reasons given for assigning homework, he will see that in theory homework is an essential ingredient in
order to develop a well rounded person. According to Langdon\(^1\), some of the reasons for assigning homework are:

1. Homework extends teaching opportunity. Todays' students live in a world where limitations of time and space are being pushed back, and vistas of human knowledge are being opened up so broad that no school day can suffice to encompass them. Presently homework provides the teaching opportunity which the school day is not long enough to furnish.

2. Homework provides for individual assimilation and independent work. Each student must make classroom group learning his own if he is to function in the living which is peculiarly his. Homework provides opportunity for this assimilation. It lets him take the information, ideas, and skills that have been opened up in the classroom and put them to work in his own experience and thoughts. He relates the words spoken in the classroom to the experience he has had and interprets them in light of those experiences. The teacher gives an assignment. The student works on it at home. He is free to experiment, to play with ideas. It is his homework and he does it in his way. He finds the points where understanding is vague. He fits what he does understand into his own pattern of thinking, broadening and deepening it. He may wonder and question. He may push parts of it aside as having little meaning for him. The function of homework in fostering independent study, in refining the ways of doing it, and making them habitual should never be minimized.

3. It strengthens learning. As a student uses in his homework the ideas, skills, and procedures which have been opened up to him throughout the school day, these become more firmly rooted and more securely established.

4. It can open wider vistas. There are specific learnings to be covered, and it is the teacher's job to see that they are. But what richness is opened up when those learnings are used as the starting point for exploration to which the way is pointed through some imaginative homework assignment.


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5. It encourages digging deeper. It can be the means of stimulation, satisfaction, and gaining depth of knowledge as well as breadth. It gives the opportunity for following individual interests, and how wise a teacher is to tie homework and interests together. The interest furnishes the means of deepening the interest and bringing it to more satisfying fruition.

6. It indicates the area of need for individual help.

According to Epps, other reasons for assigning homework are:

1. Homework allows students to complete unfinished class assignments and to make up missed work during absences.

2. Homework can provide a background for classroom activities by allowing students to preview work that is to be taken up in the near future.

3. Home assignments allow teachers to adjust class instruction to individual differences in ability and interests.

4. The material studied in class sometimes needs to be supplemented by projects that cannot be done in the classroom. Homework allows worthwhile projects such as reviewing reading materials other than textbooks, watching a TV program or movie, or writing themes or reports.

5. Homework gives the pupil the experience of working by himself. This experience will help him to develop initiative, self-discipline, and independence.

6. Homework can help the student to develop the study skills needed for obtaining knowledge on his own.

7. Permanent leisure interests in learning may be developed by homework that calls for a questioning and a researching attitude.

8. Many homework assignments enrich the classroom experience by relating what has been learned in school to everyday problem solving situations in the home, the community, and the nation.

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The one problem with the above reasons is while they look good on paper, the authors of these ideas do not state what assignments should be given in order to accomplish these ideals. For example, it is easy to say that homework is good because it lets you take the information, ideas, and skills that have been opened up in the classroom and you can put them to work in your own way, fitting them into your own experiences and thoughts. One might ask how many of the assignments made will actually interest the student enough for him to take the information, ideas, and skills that were opened up and fit them into his own experience and thoughts. Maybe the student will just get the assignment, do it, and then forget about it.

On the opposite side of the coin is the fact that many advocates and/or researchers on this subject can give just as many reasons as to why homework should not be given. However, none of the reasons listed either for or against homework are substantiated by data. According to Epps\(^1\) some of the reasons given for not assigning homework are:

1. After a full day of school, a child is tired. There is little enough time left for recreation and rest without his having to spend the evening pouring over books.

2. Homework may reduce the interest and enthusiasm with which the child faces the next day's work.

3. Parents sometimes end up doing homework and this usually results in confusing the child.

\(^1\)loc. cit., p. 5.
4. Not all homes provide equally suitable study conditions or the tools necessary for study.

5. Homework may result in the neglect of worthwhile activities such as, private music or dancing lessons, church activities, scout meetings, hobbies, and recreational reading.

6. Disagreeable homework tasks may lead a child to dislike school.

7. Homework assignments are usually geared to the "average" student. Assignments may be too difficult for some children and not challenging enough for others.

8. Family life may be disrupted by nightly homework. Some children and some parents develop emotional tensions because of homework.

According to Gilliland\(^1\) other reasons given for not assigning homework are:

1. The same results could be achieved during the school day if the curriculum included varied and stimulating experiences and if students received individual attention in developing fundamental skills.

2. Homework too often involves repetitious drill and wastes both the student's and the teacher's time.

3. Many students are more closely supervised by their parents than they are by teachers and so they frequently do not develop the desired self-direction.

4. It is possible that pupils may practice their same mistakes over and over.

5. It causes unhealthy tensions in children.

6. Since there are too many distractions and lack of reference materials in the average home, homework is usually not done under conditions conducive to study.

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The main trouble with the above reasons is that they seem to condemn all homework.

Besides every author giving pros and cons about homework, even the people who actually carry out experiments concerning homework do not always agree on whether homework is good or bad.

In the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Otto¹ wrote:

"Researchers at the elementary level show: (a) there is a very small relationship between the amount of time spent in homestudy and pupil progress; (b) homework is not significantly related to achievement as measured by teacher's marks or standardized tests; (c) homework at the elementary level has a slight positive relationship to success in high school; (d) voluntary homework has about as many values as compulsory homework; (e) the benefits of assigned homework are too small to counter balance the disadvantage, especially for pupils in poor homes; and (f) compulsory homework does not result in sufficiently improved academic accomplishments to justify the retention of the 'achievement argument' as the chief justification for homestudy assignments."

A study that is commonly discussed in articles concerning homework was done by Di Napoli². His research was conducted during the spring term of 1935 in the fifth and seventh grades of six New York City Public Schools. Three pairs of schools were chosen, each representing a different socio-economic level. Within each pair of schools certain classes were designated as either compulsory-homework or voluntary-homework classes. Individual pupils from the compulsory and voluntary groups were matched into pairs on the basis of chronological age, mental ability, and total average initial score on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. In this way, 398

²loc. cit., p. 213.
matched pairs were obtained. In the voluntary homework classes, the teachers were instructed to refrain from assigning any work or study to be done at home by any of the children. Teachers were also instructed to arrange their work so that whatever study periods they felt necessary to assign occurred during school hours. Voluntary homework was not discouraged but was accepted and praised if the teacher felt the work was praiseworthy. It is important to note, therefore, that only regular, compulsory homework was abolished, not all homework. Moreover, since regular compulsory homework above third grade was routine in the New York schools at that time, the fifth grade voluntary group had a year and a half of regular homework experiences, and the seventh grade voluntary group had three and a half years of such experience.

In the compulsory homework classes the usual routine was followed. Regular daily assignments were given, within the administrative limitations then in effect—no more than one hour daily in the fifth grade and an hour and a half in the seventh grade.

At the end of the spring semester all the children were again given the Metropolitan Achievement Tests on nine subjects. In the fifth grade, the gains on test scores favored the compulsory-homework group in eight of the nine subjects. In the seventh grade the gains were variable, favoring the compulsory group in some subjects and the voluntary group very slightly in others, but none of the differences was statistically significant.
While Di Napoli concluded from this that homework is not relevant in the seventh grade, Goldstein\(^1\) who favors homework said, "The results showed that for fifth grade children who discontinued compulsory homework for a single semester, after a year and a half of regular experience, there was a clear cut adverse effect on academic achievement. For the seventh grade pupils who discontinued compulsory homework for a single semester after three and a half years of regular homework experiences, there was no demonstrable adverse effect. What the effect on academic achievement would have been for seventh grade pupils exposed to no compulsory homework during their entire school year is quite another matter."

According to Abraham\(^2\), "Homework is subversive, and it is not all it is cracked up to be; much of it is useless, interferes with normal home life and has a detrimental effect on the physical and emotional health of both children and parents." He also says, "A two-year study in Connecticut conducted by laymen and educators concluded that homework did not necessarily add to the student's knowledge of a subject or improve habits or mental discipline." Another study mentioned by him compared two matched groups, one received supervised study in schools, and the other homework. The result was that a significantly larger gain in school achievement was shown by the group that received supervised study. He

\(^{1}\)ibid.

\(^{2}\)Abraham, Willard Ph.D., "Homework Gets a Jolt." Norfolk County Schools at Work, X, No. 4 (March 1960), P. 2.
then adds, 'Tests in high school history and economics and in elementary school spelling, geography, history, and arithmetic have shown little difference in the achievement levels of the homework and no-homework groups.'

Another study that showed that possibly homework is not what a lot of people think it is was done by Schulty. Its purpose was to determine whether a relationship existed between the amount of time that junior high school pupils spend daily on homework and the marks they obtained in reading, social studies, language arts, and mathematics. Schulty used the rank correlation coefficient to calculate the relationship between the amount of time students spent on homework and the mean grade point average of these pupils. For the seventh grade class he obtained a correlation of -.54 and for the eighth grade class he obtained a correlation of -.57. Both correlations suggest that the less time spent on homework, the better the grade. Schulty recognized three limitations in the interpretation of his findings. First of all, the data concerning the average amount of time spent on homework were assembled from estimates made by the pupils themselves. Secondly, the variables of the academic ability of the students were not controlled in the study. Other research has shown that pupils of high general intelligence tend to spend less time on their homework than do pupils of lesser ability and yet they maintain higher grades. Finally, he says

that his study only measured quantity of homework in terms of time spent. It did not measure the efficiency with which a pupil used this time.

So if one were to study the research done on the effectiveness of homework, about the only logical conclusion that he would come to would be that we do not know if homework is really beneficial or detrimental to the youngster. On the other hand, he would also have to come to the conclusion that maybe some homework is good and some homework is bad. For some reason it seems that no one who has researched the area of homework has looked at the individual assignments given to pupils. Until this is done, we will never know what homework is good and what homework is bad. For example, let us say that we have two equal groups and the teacher teaches them exactly the same way except for the fact that Group A gets nightly homework assignments and Group B does not get any homework. Now if we test these youngsters at the end of the year and if we see that both groups make about the same amount of progress, can we really conclude that homework is not effective? All we can say is that as measured, her homework is not really beneficial to her students. Possibly if she gave other homework assignments then Group A would have done better than Group B. But what if Group A did a lot better than Group B, can we conclude that homework is good and that youngster should spend an hour a night doing homework? The answer is no. This is because we would first have to look at the teacher's individual assignments and see what each one accomplished. Maybe only one per cent of her assignments were any
good and the rest were just busywork. Then we have to find this one percent and say that homework is beneficial and that the rest is not. We cannot come out with the blanket statement that homework is good or bad. All one can really say is that these certain assignments accomplished these certain goals and that these other assignments did not accomplish the goals that the teacher wanted them to accomplish. Therefore, it is best to just look at the individual assignments given students and to try and determine if these assignments are actually benefitting the students who do them.

At the junior high school level some of the assignments looked at consisted of using teacher made worksheets to supplement a lesson, the use of workbooks designed to supplement texts, and the use of programmed texts. At the college level students have to do such things as write papers, teach children, read books, take classes where there is no definite homework assignment given, and take classes under the contract system where the student knows what grade he will receive by knowing which homework assignments he will do. The above mentioned homework assignments are the ones studied in this research project to determine if the students are learning from the assignments what the teacher thinks they will learn. It is hoped that this study will help add some specifics to the question of under what conditions are assignments for homework outside the classroom effective.
CHAPTER II

A HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT IN A SIXTH
GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE ON HOW TO
USE THE PARTS OF SPEECH

In a sixth grade language arts course that was studied the usual procedure was for the teacher to supplement the textbook, The Macmillan English Series Grade Six by Pollock and Straub, and the classroom discussions on the various parts of speech by giving the students worksheets (Appendix A, Pages 61-70) which they were to work on at home. The idea behind this homework assignment was to give the students extra practice on what was discussed in class. The next day the teacher would collect the homework but would not discuss it in class unless one of the students had a question about the previous night's work.

Hypothesis

Up until the time of this research project the teacher assumed that by doing this homework assignment the students would learn more about the parts of speech than if they just listened to the discussions in the classroom and read the textbook. The present study was undertaken to investigate the teacher's hypothesis that the group given the homework assignment would do significantly better than the group not given the homework assignment.
Procedure

To test the learning effect of this homework assignment two equivalent sixth grade language arts classes were chosen. The fourth hour class consisted of twenty-eight students and the sixth hour class consisted of twenty-five students. While the two classes were not tested to make sure that they were of equivalent ability, such a judgment was made by their teacher who had already worked with these two groups of students for about nine months. Pre-testing was not done to determine the starting level of each group of students because of the amount of time that would have been needed to develop and/or apply a valid pre-test.

The procedure used to test the learning effect of the homework assignment was to give the fourth hour class the regular reading assignments from the text, the regular classroom discussions, and the homework assignments that were always used in the past. The sixth hour class was just given the regular reading assignments and the regular discussions. If a point was brought up or stressed in one class, the teacher made sure to stress the same point in the other class. At the end of the unit both classes were given the same test (Appendix B, Pages 71-74).

Results

The scores that each class received (Appendix C, Pages 75-76) were compared using the one-tailed t-test at the 5 percent level of significance to determine if the group that was given the homework assignments would do significantly better than the group that
was not given the homework assignments. The resultant t-value of 0.530 indicated that the class that received the homework assignments did not do significantly better than the class that did not receive the homework assignments.

The conclusion reached from this study was that this homework assignment did not help these students to learn how to use the various parts of speech. Furthermore, the teacher of this class now believes that her method of using homework should be changed. For example, she now wants to see what will happen next year when she discusses in class the homework that is brought in.

While the conclusion reached from this experiment indicated that the use of student worksheets is not always beneficial, this study also shows that more research is needed in this area of homework. Maybe instead of all the students receiving the worksheets, only certain students may benefit from this type of homework.
In this sixth grade social studies class, the teacher believes that students do better when they have a guide to study while they are reading their assignments. She says that you can easily tell a group of students that they should read a certain chapter of some book for the next class meeting and that they should be able to come into class the next day and be ready to discuss it. However, she thinks that if the students do read the chapter, they probably will get very little out of it because they do not know what to look for in the chapter. Therefore, students should have a study guide to help them while they are reading. But while this teacher believes that it is important for the students to have a guide to study while they are reading, she also feels that it is very important for this homework to be voluntary because you should not force children to do homework.

Hypothesis

This experiment was designed to test the hypothesis that if a student did a good job on the homework he would receive higher scores on the unit test then if he only did a fair job on the homework, and he would receive higher scores on the unit tests when he
did a fair job on the homework then when he did a poor job on the homework. If the student completed all of the assignments in the workbook for the unit and he answered most of the questions correctly, he was considered to have done a good job on the homework. If he only did about three-fourths of the workbook, he was considered to have only done a fair job on the homework. If he did not do the homework or if he did it with very little accuracy, he was considered to have done a poor job on the homework.

The textbook the teacher used for the class was Exploring American Neighbors (The Follett Publishing Company). To supplement the readings, the teacher also assigned as homework the workbook that went along with the readings. The test the teacher used for the unit consisted of the test in the Teacher's Guide that went along with the workbook.

Results

Each of the 132 students in the teacher's classes had the choice of either doing the homework or of not doing it. After the student did the assignment, it was noted how well he did the work. The student's scores on the unit tests were then compared with how well he did the work in the workbook (Appendix D, Pages 77-81). For 129 out of 132 students, if the student did a good job on the homework assignment, he received a higher average score than if he only did a fair job on the homework, and he received a higher average score on the units where he did a fair job on the homework than when he did a poor job on the homework.
The conclusion reached for this homework assignment was that the hypothesis is valid, that is, if the student does have a workbook to work with while he is reading the textbook and if he does a good job on the workbook, he learned more than if he did only a fair job on the homework, and if he did a fair job on the homework, he still learned more than if he did a poor job on the homework.
CHAPTER IV

TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND USAGE
THROUGH THE USE OF A PROGRAMMED TEXT

The teacher of this eighth grade English course had two groups of very poor students. Her fourth hour class consisted of 33 students and her fifth hour class consisted of 32 students. Her normal homework pattern was to first discuss a lesson on the English language and then have the students do at home the appropriate chapters from the text, English 2200, A Programmed Course in Grammar and Usage by Blumenthal. The test she normally used for these classes was from the booklet, Tests for English 2200, A Programmed Course in Grammar and Usage by Blumenthal.

Hypothesis

The present study was undertaken to investigate the teacher's hypothesis that the group given the homework assignment would do significantly better than the group not given the homework assignment.

Procedure

To test the learning effect of this homework assignment two eighth grade English classes were chosen. The same teacher normally taught both classes. While the two classes were not tested to make sure that they were of equivalent ability, such a judgment
was made by their teacher who had already worked with these two groups of students for about nine months. Pre-testing was not done to determine the starting level of each group of students because of the amount of time that would have been needed to develop and/or apply a valid pre-test.

The procedure used to test the learning effect of the homework assignment was to give the fourth hour class the assignment to do at home, Unit 8 of the programmed text. This unit was about sentence fragments and run-on sentences. The fourth hour class also had to listen to the class discussion that went along with the unit. The fifth hour class was given verbal lessons on the unit, but they did not have to do the work in the textbook. At the end of the unit both classes were given the same test for Unit 8 from the test booklet that went along with the textbook.

Results

The scores that each class received (Appendix E, Pages 82-83) were compared using the one-tailed t-test at the 5 percent level of significance to determine if the group that was given the homework assignment would do significantly better than the group that was not given the homework assignment. The resultant t-value of 4.07 indicated that the class that received the homework assignment did significantly better than the class that was not given the homework assignment.

For the next unit of the text, Unit 9, which dealt with how to punctuate a sentence, the procedure was reversed. The fifth hour
class had the programmed text and the classroom discussions. The scores that each class received (Appendix F, Pages 84-85) were compared using the one-tailed t-test at the 5 percent level of significance to determine if the group given the homework assignment would do significantly better than the group not given the homework assignment. The resultant t-value of 0.271 indicates that the class that was given the homework assignment did not do significantly better than the class that was not given the homework assignment.

Since the researcher did not test to make sure that these two groups were of equivalent ability, the conflicting results raise the question of whether it was the particular unit (Unit 8 or 9) which was not appropriate for homework or whether the results can be explained by the fact that the two classes actually did differ in ability. However, the fact that there was conflicting results suggests that these homework assignments should be looked at in the future to see if the programmed text is of value to the students.
CHAPTER V

THE USE OF PRACTICE SHEETS
TO HELP A SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE
ARTS CLASS LEARN PUNCTUATION
AND CAPITALIZATION

In a sixth grade language arts class that was studied the usual
procedure was for the teacher to supplement the textbook, The Macmil-
lan English Series Grade Six, by Pollock and Straub with worksheets
(Appendix G, Pages 86-93) that the students could do at home. The
idea behind this assignment was to give the students extra practice
on what was discussed in the classroom.

Hypothesis

The present study was undertaken to investigate the teacher's
hypothesis that the group given the worksheets to be done at home
would do significantly better than the group not given the worksheets.

Procedure

To test the learning effect of this homework assignment, two
sixth grade language arts classes were chosen. The same teacher
normally taught both classes. While the two classes were not
tested to make sure that they were of equivalent ability, such a
judgment was made by their teacher who had already worked with
these two groups of students for about nine months. In the past

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nine months both classes received about an equal number of each letter grade in every assignment that they were given. For this study both classes were treated identically except that the sixth hour class was given the worksheets to do at home and the fourth hour class had no homework. If a point was brought up in one class the teacher made sure to discuss the same point in the other class in an effort to keep the discussion in both classes as equal as possible.

Results

At the end of the unit both classes were given the same test (Appendix H, Pages 93-94). The scores each class received (Appendix 1, Pages 95-96) were compared using the one-tailed t-test at the 5 percent level of significance to determine if the group that was given the homework assignment would do significantly better than the group that was not given the homework assignment. The resultant t-value of 0.172 indicated that the class that received the homework assignment did not do significantly better than the class that was not given the homework assignment.

While the conclusion reached from this experiment indicated that the use of practice sheets is not always beneficial, this study also indicated that more research is needed in this area of homework. Maybe instead of all the students receiving the practice sheets, only certain students benefit from this type of homework.
CHAPTER VI

HOMEWORK IN A CLASS WHERE
THE STUDENT ONLY DOES THE
ASSIGNMENT IF HE WANTS TO

The Human Development and Learning Classes (course 250) at Western Michigan University are for sophomores who hope to become teachers in about three years. There are many instructors for this course and each one handles his homework assignments in a different way. In Chapters Six and Seven, two different ways of using homework in a 250 Human Development and Learning Class will be described. Each class consists of a different teacher and different students.

According to one teacher, the objective of this course is for the students to "Formulate a better understanding about children's development and to develop a working philosophy of their attitudes toward kids." In an effort to accomplish this goal the teacher has the students observe youngsters in a classroom situation. This particular assignment is a departmental requirement, and each teacher of this course has his students do it.

Except for this one mandatory assignment, there is no assigned homework given. Instead the student is given a list of about 120 books (Appendix J, Pages 97-103), and he is told that he is to read the ones he wants to. He is never tested on any of the books. If the student has a question about one of the books he is to bring up
the question in class and a discussion will follow. If there are no questions, the teacher will start the discussion by talking about an event reported in the newspaper involving human development, family relationships, or current human conflict situations, e.g. a fight between a teacher and a student. The students are supposed to enter into this discussion and to use in it the knowledge that they have gained from their readings. In the end the student receives the mark he thinks he deserves. So basically the only homework the student gets is to read some of the 120 books on the list handed out in class and from these readings he is supposed to gain knowledge to help him enter the discussions in the classroom.

This homework assignment was examined by handing the students a questionnaire which asked them their opinions about the homework assignments they were given for this course. The following paragraphs state the questions the students were asked and also a description of the students' replies to the questions.

**Question 1: In your opinion what is the main objective of the course?** Out of the 39 students that were given the questionnaire, 37 (95%) stated that the objective of this course was basically the same one that the teacher gave. The typical answer given was that the basic objective of this course was "To show how a human develops through life and how certain conditions affect his growth. Thus knowing more about what makes people tick, we can become better teachers and humans." Only two students did not respond with an answer similar to the above quotation. One of these students said, "This is a required class for education, but
I really don't know the main objective." The other student wrote that the main objective was "To teach us to learn on our own without written instructions."

Question 2: Do you believe that the homework assignments helped you in this course? Thirty-five (90%) of the 39 students wrote that they believed that the homework they were given helped them to formulate a better understanding about children's development. Most of the students wrote that they learned a lot from reading some of the books on the list handed out in the class. The students seemed to like the idea of choosing books that they wanted to read and they usually felt that since they picked out what they wanted to read, they got a lot more out of the books than if the instructor chose the books for them. The typical answers given for this question were, "The list of books gave each individual the opportunity to learn what they needed to learn. There was a large enough selection to fit the needs of the different students. Since everyone is not the same why should we all read the same things. In this case you actually could learn something", or "I learned a great deal from this assignment and I learned more than what I would have learned if I had been forced." Out of the four negative replies received on this question, two of the students wrote that they liked the discussions and that they learned more from the discussions than from reading any of the books. Only two students did not like the fact that there were no definite assignments given and that they could read whatever they wanted. One of these students wrote, "We had no homework that we had to do and I did none. In a field that I have no
background or previous experience in, it is senseless to have this much freedom, for until you have even a slight interest it is not possible to get further interested." This student in answer to a later question which asked him what he learned from the articles he read, said that he really did not learn anything from the articles. As to how this student would teach this class he wrote, "I would definitely assign a textbook and supply background material so that there would be a foundation for further study. Perhaps the rest of his ideas such as no tests are ok, but at least give background for further classes and study." This student then went on to say, "In my other classes in college I have really been pushed. I am in the Honor's curriculum and competition has been tough. My grade point suffered but I have learned so much. I actually came out of a biology class, despite my hatred of science, with an actual interest perhaps due to better understanding. This class is worth zero, the first in my career." Another student wrote, "The casual atmosphere was great, but due to all of my previous years of programming---homework, tests, etc.---I was not able to adjust to the fact that nothing was required unless you yourself required it of yourself in order to learn."

**Question 3:** What did you learn from the articles you read that you didn't know before? Most of the students wrote that they learned about how a child develops, the plight of minority groups, how to get along with people, and various methods of teaching children. None of the students said what they learned and instead they just listed the subject area in which they felt that they
learned something.

**Question 4:** If you were the one to design homework for this course, what homework assignments would you have given? Twenty-two (65%) of the 39 students said that they would give the same homework assignments that this teacher gave. Five students wrote that they would have given no homework and would have counted more on the discussions in class. Five other students wrote that they would have just given a list of assigned readings. Two students wrote that they would have concentrated on having the students do more observations and less reading.

**Question 5:** What mark are you going to receive in this course? Twenty-eight (72%) of the 39 students wrote that they were going to ask for an A and two of the students wrote that they deserved a B. Nine students did not answer this question.

Besides answering the questionnaire, several of the students commented on college homework in general. The interesting thing about their comments is that the students who gave them wrote that they disliked college homework in general but that they liked the way this course was taught and that they learned a lot from this course. One of these students wrote, "The homework assignments for my other class was much too difficult for the length of time allotted." Another student wrote, "Homework is only a device used by the professors to compensate for their inadequacy as an information source. It's used as a weapon in controlling the behavior of a student, and it is a damn good tool to destroy his natural curiosity and creativity." Another
student wrote, "A lot of college homework is a big joke. It is busy work. I have done an awful lot of homework in college only to discover that I wasted my time because it was never used. I guess teachers don't feel that in order to make a homework assignment valuable, it should at least merit some discussion. Very often homework is assigned and that is the last thing ever said about it."

From the students' answers to the questionnaire, it appears that the students in the class liked this kind of homework assignment while only four students did not like the idea of reading what you want to. However, since none of the students wrote down what they learned from the books read, it may be that they did not learn as much as they thought they did. Since this may possibly be the case, further research will be needed in this area to determine how much students do retain in this type of homework situation. For example, the students could be given a test on the books that they read to determine how much they actually retained from reading the various textbooks.
This Human Development and Learning class at Western Michigan University is similar to the one discussed in the previous chapter but this one is taught by a different teacher. According to this teacher, the main objectives of this course are: 1. "to see if the students can relate to a youngster in a meaningful relationship where learning can occur" and 2. "to provide learning experiences so that the student can become more knowledgeable about how humans develop inwardly." In an effort to accomplish these objectives, the students are given many homework assignments. The teacher believes that much of the responsibility for learning should be placed on the student and that the teacher should function as a "Director of Learning".

There are basically five different homework assignments given out in this course. First of all, the student will have to work with a child who is having learning problems and he will have to teach him on a one-to-one basis for up to four hours a week. The student usually works with a child who is a problem reader. The reason that the teacher gives this assignment is to "give the potential teacher some feedback on his ability to work with students."
Secondly, the student is to write a paper where he has to describe his own physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. The student is to describe himself as a preschooler, elementary, junior high, senior high, and as a college student. Finally, he has to describe his ideal professional self. The paper is to be documented at all levels and the student is to determine if and how he is different from the average or normal person. The reason that this assignment is given is so that the student will have a chance to look at himself in some depth before he looks at other people. In the past the teacher has noticed that from this assignment the student has learned that if a person does differ from the norm, it does not have to be a problem. When the teacher gets the papers from the students, she reads them over to see if the students did an adequate job on the assignment. She does not grade the papers.

Another homework assignment that the student has to do is to write a case study on a learner, preferably the one he worked with during his four hours of teaching a week. This case study should include a description of the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of the child's development. This assignment is given so that the students will have the experience of taking a close look at a youngster with learning problems and also to see if the student can make recommendations based on the facts of the case. While this assignment is usually mandatory, due to the fact that the semester during which this research is taking place is only 7½ weeks long, the teacher has made this an optional
assignment. An assignment the student can do in place of the case study is to produce an audio-visual presentation on some aspect of learning.

Another homework assignment that is given the students is for them to read the text *Child and Adolescent Psychology Behavior and Development* by Medinnis and Johnson. Four objective tests are administered on the book but only the fourth one is given a letter grade.

These homework assignments were examined by handing the students a questionnaire which asked them their opinions about the homework assignments they were given for this course. The following paragraphs state the questions the students were asked and also a description of the students' comments to the questions.

**Question 1:** What are your feelings about the homework assignments? Seventeen (90%) of the 19 students in this class wrote that they felt that the homework helped them to better understand the teaching profession and the youngsters whom they will be teaching. One student felt that the homework assignments were just busy work and another student wrote that the assignments other than the student teaching assignment were busywork.

**Question 2:** What is your opinion of the homework assignment where you had to teach a student with learning problems? Fifteen (78%) of the 19 students wrote that it was beneficial to them to have to teach a child with learning problems. Only three students wrote that they were not completely satisfied with this assignment. One of these students wrote that she did not like the assignment.
because the student she worked with would not do any homework for her. Another student wrote that this was a good assignment except for the fact that she worked with too many students for too short a time. The third student wrote that this assignment was useless because her problem child would receive little or no help at home.

**Question 3:** What did you learn about yourself in your self-analysis paper that you didn't know before? Eleven (57%) of the 19 students wrote that they learned something from this assignment but they all were quite vague on what they actually did learn. One student wrote that he learned that he did something drastically wrong on his way from preschool to now and that he is not quite sure how to handle it. Another student wrote that because of this assignment, she became a little more aware of herself. Other comments were, "I know what I want and how I will get it", "I learned that I was very limited in any social activities up to the age of fourteen", and another student wrote that she learned what some of her problems were as an adolescent and why she turned out like she did. Eight of the students in the class wrote that they did not learn anything from writing this self-analysis paper.

**Question 4:** What did you learn from writing a case study that you did not know before? Nine of the 19 (47%) students wrote that they did benefit from this assignment. Three of these students wrote that they learned how to evaluate a student more objectively. Four other students wrote that they learned about the problems that children have. None of the students were very specific about what they actually did learn from this assignment. Five of the
students in this class wrote that they did not learn anything from writing a case study. Five students did not do this assignment.

**Question 5:** What is your opinion of the textbook, "Child and Adolescent Psychology, Behavior and Development"? What did you learn from this textbook? Nine (47%) of the 19 students wrote that they thought that the textbook was good while 10 (53%) of the students wrote that they did not learn anything from the textbook. The main criticisms against the book were that it was too long, too boring, or that it did not give any definite solutions to the problems facing teachers. Of the 9 students who wrote that they liked the textbook not one of them wrote what they learned from their reading of the textbook.

**Question 6:** What are your feelings about doing an audio-visual presentation and did you learn something from watching the other students put on their presentation? Only 7 of the 19 students answered this question and 4 (57%) of these students wrote that they liked the assignment while 3 (43%) of them wrote that they did not like the assignment. None of the students went into any detail about what they got out of this assignment.

**Question 7:** If you were teaching this course, what would you have done different? Sixteen of the 19 (84%) students wrote that they would have taught this course about the same way that this teacher taught the course. A few of them wrote that they would have changed the textbook or would have made the course more structured or would have changed the dates when the assignments were due but none of the students wrote that they would have completely changed
the way this course was taught. Three students did not answer this question.

From the students' replies to the questionnaire, it appears that the students for the most part believed that it was beneficial for them to teach a child with learning problems. Since the students were quite vague on what they actually learned from reading the assigned texts or from writing papers for this class, the actual learning value from these assignments is hard to judge. Consequently, it appears that more research should be done in regards to what students actually learn from reading books or from writing papers. For example, it might be a good idea to actually test these students on what they read. Or, it would be interesting to find out if these students' opinions about homework for this class have changed after they have taught a couple of years.
CHAPTER VIII

HOMEWORK IN A TEACHING AND LEARNING CLASS THAT IS SET UP ON A CONTRACT SYSTEM

The students in this 300 level Teaching and Learning course at Western Michigan University are training to become teachers and this particular course is set up to prepare these students for their future teaching experience.

The homework assignments for this course are set up according to a contract system. The student is expected to complete a certain amount of assignments if he wants a "C", more assignments if he wants a "B", and still more assignments if he wants an "A". At the beginning of each semester the student gets a handout which shows him what to do for the mark he wants to receive.

If the student wants a "C" he has to: 1. teach a student for fifteen hours and then write a resume of this teaching experience, 2. he has to attend a self-instructional audio-visual laboratory where he is to learn how to run a movie projector, a filmstrip projector, a tape recorder, an overhead projector, and an opaque projector, 3. he has to write a paper defending a theory of education that is assigned to him, 4. he has to make up a teacher evaluation device, 5. he has to write a critique of the audio-visual experience, and 6. he has to write some behavioral objectives for a micro-teaching experience.
For a "B" the student has to do all of the above and he also has to construct a valid, reliable test on the booklet, *Constructing Achievement Tests* by Gronlund and he has to teach a course segment on the subject of discipline.

For an "A" the student has to do an individual project plus all of the above assignments.

The reason that the teacher has the student write a paper about a theory of education is so that the student will have a chance to look at different theories of education. Instead of letting the student write on any theory, the teacher assigns a particular theory to each student. The student then has to defend this theory. When the teacher receives the papers from the students, he reads them over and accepts or rejects the paper. The student is not given any mark.

The reason that the teacher has the student write up a teacher evaluation device is to force the student to look at what makes a good teacher. When the teacher receives this paper from the student he just accepts or rejects the paper.

The only deadline for turning in papers for this class is at the end of the semester. Consequently, unless the student comes back later, he does not get to see his paper or the teacher's comments on the paper. However, if a paper is turned in that is not acceptable the student gets an incomplete and he has to do the paper over.

These homework assignments were examined by handing the students a questionnaire which asked them their opinions about the
homework assignments they were given for this course. The follow-
ing paragraphs state the questions the students were asked and
also a description of the students' replies to the questions.

**Question 1:** What do you believe are the basic objectives of
this course? Do you believe that the homework assignments helped
you to meet the basic objectives of this course or were they just
busywork? Forty-four (86%) of the 51 students who were given this
questionnaire knew that the basic objective of this course was to
train them to become teachers while 7 of the students wrote that
there were not any objectives for this course. Out of the 44 stu-
dents who wrote that they knew the basic objectives of this course,
20 of them felt that the homework assignments were of benefit to
them and that it was not just busywork. Eleven of the students
felt that the homework given them was just busywork and that it
did not really help them to meet the basic objectives of this
course. That is, it would not help them to become teachers.
Twelve students had mixed feelings about the homework assignments
given them. Most of these students wrote that some of the assign-
ments were good and some were bad, but only 6 students wrote which
assignments they liked or did not like. Most of these students
wrote that they liked the assignment where they had to participate
in a classroom situation, micro-teach, and make-up an objective
test. They did not like the homework assignment where they had to
write on a theory of education and they did not like teaching a
course segment on discipline.
Question 2: What do you feel you gained from doing the fifteen hours of participation? Forty-one (80%) of the 51 students felt that their fifteen hours of participation was beneficial to them. Most of them wrote that it was an enjoyable experience and that it helped to prepare them for their future teaching experience. Ten of the students did not like their participation experience but these students did not say what they did not like about it.

Question 3: What is your opinion of the self-instructional audio-visual laboratory? Thirty-three (64%) of the 51 students felt that the self-instructional audio-visual laboratory was worthwhile and most of them commented that it should be a requirement for every future teacher. On the other hand, 17 students did not like this particular assignment. The main reason given for not liking this assignment was that by the time the students would get to use the equipment in an actual teaching situation, they would have forgotten how to run the various pieces of machinery or that they already knew how to run the equipment and they did not like the idea of being showed something that they already knew. One student did not do this assignment.

Question 4: What theory of education did you write about and what did you learn from this assignment? Thirty-nine (76%) of the 51 students wrote that they did not learn anything from this particular homework assignment. A lot of the students just wrote down the name of the theory they wrote about and they did not say a thing about what they learned. The rest of the students wrote that this assignment was just a lot of busywork. Of the 12 students who
wrote that they learned something from this assignment, none of them were very specific about what they learned. One said that he "learned that everyone has an individual theory for himself." Another student wrote that he learned that no particular theory was best.

Question 5: What did you learn from the assignment where you had to write up a teacher evaluation device? None of the students wrote that they learned anything from this assignment and most of the students wrote that this assignment was just a lot of busywork.

Question 6: What did you learn from the assignment where you had to write some behavioral objectives for a micro-teaching experience? Twenty-three (45%) of the 51 students wrote that they did not learn anything from this assignment. Twenty-eight (55%) of the 51 students wrote that they learned something from this assignment but none of them really stated what they learned. The typical responses to this question were, "This is important before attempting to teach, helps organize one's thoughts", or "I learned that it isn't easy to put into words what you want to do", or "I learned how to write behavioral objectives."

Question 7: What did you learn from the assignment where you had to teach a course segment on discipline? Nineteen (37%) of the 51 students wrote that they learned nothing from this particular assignment. Twenty-nine (57%) of the 51 students wrote that they learned something from this assignment but most of these students wrote that it was only the discussion part of the assignment that
they learned from. Other comments on what they learned from this assignment were that they learned about child behavior and attitudes toward school, or that they learned to accept students as individuals with problems of his own or that they learned how to handle certain cases of discipline. At no time were any specific answers given on what they learned. They would more or less just say that they learned about discipline or about a child's problems without elaborating on what they learned.

Three students did not do this assignment.

Question 8: Do you believe that the contract method of assigning homework is a good idea or do you believe that everyone should do all the same homework assignments? Why? Thirty (59%) of the 51 students wrote that they liked the contract system because they always knew where they stood as far as grades go or because they could do the assignments and not worry about the grades because they knew what they were going to receive. Twenty-one (41%) of the 51 students did not like this way of assigning homework. The typical reasons given for not liking the contract system were, "If an assignment is important, it should be given to everybody", or "there is no differentiating between the quality of work", or "I don't care for this method at all. I like to have my work evaluated. I get the feeling that he doesn't care how good it is, just so long as we do it."

Question 9: What mark did you strive for in this course? Why? Twenty-seven (53%) of the 51 students wrote that they tried for an A and 21 (42%) of the 51 students wrote that they tried for a B. Ten
of the students wrote that they tried for a B because they did not have the time to try for an A. Two students wrote that they did not try for an A because they did not think that the extra project needed for the A was worth the extra work. Most of the rest of the students wrote that they only tried for a B because that was all they needed to keep up their grade point average. Only one student tried for a C and he wrote that he did this because he is carrying eleven hours and is working nights. Two students did not answer this question.

Question 10: Did you like using the programmed text? Why?
Thirty-one (61%) of the 51 students wrote that they liked using a programmed text. Twelve of these students wrote that they liked the programmed text because it makes learning easy and because you can go through the book at a fairly fast pace. Twelve (23%) of the students did not like the idea of using a programmed text. The main reason that these students gave for not liking the programmed text was because they felt that they were being programmed and that they did not like this because they are not machines. Eight students did not answer this question.

Question 11: If you were the teacher of this course what kind of assignment would you have given? Twenty-seven (53%) of the 51 students wrote that they would have given the same assignments that this teacher gave. Fourteen (27%) other students wrote that they would have liked to change the way the class was taught with the main changes mentioned being to get a better text or to have the
students do a lot more participation. Ten students did not answer this question.

From the students' answers to the questionnaire, it appears that a lot of the students do not believe that the homework assignments were beneficial to them. Nineteen percent of the students felt that they did not benefit from the assignment where they had to teach a youngster for 15 hours, 33 percent felt that they did not benefit from attending the self-instructional audio-visual laboratory, 76 percent of the students felt that they did not benefit from writing about a theory of education, none of the students felt that they benefited from writing a teacher evaluation device, and 40 percent felt that they did not learn anything from the assignment where they had to teach a course segment on discipline.

On the basis of the above results, it appears that further research should be done on the homework that students are given. For example, teachers should possibly discuss the homework assignments with the students to find out the students' reaction to the various tasks they are given. If the student does not like an assignment, he may get very little benefit out of doing the assignment.
CHAPTER IX

HOMEWORK DESIGNED TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

This 300 level Teaching and Learning class at Western Michigan University is taught by a different teacher than the one discussed in the previous chapter. This teacher believes that the basic objective of this course is to prepare students for the responsibilities of classroom instruction. In an effort to accomplish this objective the teacher places emphasis on six areas of teaching. They are: 1. the purpose of schools, 2. the selection and organization of learning experiences, 3. instructional methods and materials, 4. patterns of curriculum organization, 5. classroom management, and 6. non-instructional duties of the teacher in the school and the community.

One of the homework assignments the teacher uses to help acquaint the students with the problems of teachers is to have them read the books *Teachers For The Real World*, by Smith, *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, by Mager, and *Toward A Contact Curriculum*, by Fantini. She also has them read the article, "Murder In The Classroom" by Silberman. These readings are assigned because they discuss concepts that are not in a lot of other texts, e.g. open classroom.

Another homework assignment that is given out in this course is for the students to visit a classroom for four public school
days. This particular assignment is a departmental requirement and every teacher of the 300 Teaching and Learning classes is required to give it.

Another departmental requirement is for the students to attend an audio-visual self-instructional laboratory where they learn how to use a tape recorder, a movie projector, a filmstrip projector, an overhead projector, and an opaque projector.

Another homework assignment is for the students to prepare a micro-lesson and to teach it on video tape. There are many reasons why this assignment is given. First of all it shows the future teacher how she will appear to children. The teacher of this course said that 95 percent of her students have never heard their voices on tape and have never seen themselves on video tape. This teacher furthermore believes that this assignment will force the students to make certain professional decisions that every teacher must make when they start to teach a unit. For example, they have to decide what should be taught, in what sequence it should be taught, what text or materials should be used during the teaching of the unit, what kind of a test to give, and how to start and end a lesson.

Besides teaching a micro-lesson, the student also has to develop a unit plan and two accompanying lesson plans in the language arts or science areas. This assignment is required by the Education Department. This teacher also likes to give this assignment because: 1. it gives the students a chance to organize a package of learning materials, and 2. it forces students to decide what objectives should be taught for the grades they want to teach.
For another homework assignment the students have a choice of doing one of four possible tasks. They can collect materials for at least three curriculum areas or they can write critiques of ten articles they have read from recent professional journals dealing with classroom issues or they can write two book critiques or they can develop a folder of bulletin board layouts.

The students also have to participate in a group discussion. For this assignment they will have to read several current articles dealing with their topic and then they will discuss this topic in front of the class.

These homework assignments were examined by handing the students a questionnaire which asked them their opinions about the homework assignments they were given for this course. The following paragraphs state the questions the students were asked and they also give a description of the students' replies to the questions.

**Question 1:** What did you do during your four days of participation in a public school system and what did you learn from this experience? Forty-eight (84%) of the 57 students who answered this questionnaire gave positive comments about their four days of participation and wrote that they felt that they learned a lot about teaching from this homework assignment. Some of the typical comments were, "I was very active and had an excellent teacher. I learned several useful procedures which I have noted in my records", or "It was the most informative experience I've had", or "I participated in a music situation and I really learned many important
things and ideas." Six of the students had negative reactions to their fifteen hours of participation and in each case the only reason that the students gave for not liking their experience was because they didn't get to do enough participation. A typical response was, "I just watched mostly because the teacher seemed to want full control over students." Two students will do this assignment later on, and one student did not write down his feelings about the assignment.

**Question 2:** What is your opinion of the self-instructional audio-visual laboratory? Thirty-nine of the 57 students felt that the self-instructional audio-visual laboratory was a worthwhile experience. Seven more students liked the experience and wrote that it was informative but that they had a doubt about how much they will remember when they actually go out into the field and teach. Eleven students did not like the experience. The typical comment from these students was, "I haven't retained anything from what I learned. Maybe I'll remember some of it but by the time I need to use it most of it will be gone."

**Question 3:** What is your opinion of the assignment where you prepared a micro-lesson and then put it on video-tape? Fifty (88%) of the 57 students wrote that they really enjoyed the assignment where they had to prepare a micro-lesson and then put it on video-tape. The typical responses to this assignment were "excellent experience-everyone should see themselves as others see them" or "In seeing myself on video tape, I saw myself as I actually would appear to a group of students and in this experience I saw a
great many of my weaknesses and strengths as a teacher', or "I felt that this was one of the most beneficial experiences I've had in my two years of college. I learned more in five minutes than I did in my two years of college. I learned more in five minutes than I did in the other seven weeks of the class." Only seven of the students did not like this assignment. The only complaint that six of these students had was that they taught their micro-lesson to their peers and not to the type of student that they will be teaching in the future. The seventh student wrote, "I did very little preparation and got very little out of it."

**Question 4:** What are your feelings about the unit plan you developed? Do you feel that you will ever use it? Do you feel that unit plans are a waste of time? Why? Forty-eight (48%) of the 57 students felt that the assignment where they had to develop a unit plan was a worthwhile assignment. The typical response was, 'I feel that the unit plan was valuable, and I have already used parts of it in my participation experience. I feel that unit plans are not wasteful. If well organized, they keep one from wasting time.' Nine students did not like writing unit plans. However, they did not say why they did not like them except for saying that unit plans are a waste of time.

**Question 5:** Give a summary of the articles or books that you read for this course. Please state as much as you can about these books or articles. Out of the 57 students who answered this question, not one of them actually gave a summary of any of the books or articles that they read. Their summaries mainly consisted of...
saying, "I read the assigned books for the class and I can use many of the ideas from them", or "The articles on Headstart were beneficial because I plan to teach economically deprived children", or "All these readings were valuable and dealt with theories and philosophies for teaching". However, not one of the students wrote what ideas he could use from the readings or what theories and philosophies he did learn and what he learned from these theories.

Question 6: If you developed any collection of materials for this course would you please describe them and also state what you feel was the value of this assignment? Twenty-five of the students made a collection of materials for bulletin boards or for presenting information in class. Nineteen (76%) of these 25 students wrote that this assignment was worthwhile and that they will be able to use the materials they collected in the future. Five of the students just listed the materials they collected but they did not say if their collection will have any future value to them. Only one student wrote that she did not find any value in this assignment but she did not say why she disliked the assignment.

Question 7: What was your group discussion about and what did you learn about this topic that you didn't know before? Ten of the students in the class did their group discussion on the open classroom and each of these students wrote that they benefited from this discussion. Nine of these students said that they read a lot about the open classroom and that they can now discuss it and that they could not do this before they were given this assignment. However, none of these students wrote down what they learned from this
assignment that they did not know before. The typical answer given was, "My group discussion was on the open classroom concept. I became more aware of the criticism of this technique". Not once did this student write down what the criticism of the technique was or how the class works or how it is set up.

Five students did their group discussion on head start and each of these students wrote that they did not know anything about the topic before the assignment and that they learned a lot from this assignment but none of the students wrote down what they learned. This same pattern went for the students who did their group discussion on behavior modification, discipline, the non-graded classroom, evaluation of school materials, evaluation of students, narcotics, the evaluation of textbooks, and sex education. Eleven of the students wrote that they learned nothing from their group discussion assignment. Three students just mentioned what their group discussion was about but they didn't say if they learned anything from this assignment.

Question 8: If you were teaching this course what would you have done differently? Thirty-one of the students wrote that if they were teaching this class they would have done it the same way this teacher did. Twelve other students wrote that if they could teach this course they would keep it basically the same as it was taught and only change one or two assignments.

From the students' answers to the questionnaire, it appears that most of the students felt that they learned a lot from the homework assignments given them. However, further research should
be done in this area because while the students feel that they benefited from the assignments, they should be tested to determine what they actually did learn from each assignment. For example, the students should be tested on the books that they read to see if they actually learned anything from this assignment. Also, it may be beneficial to have the students re-evaluate the homework assignments after they have taught a couple of years. This might be particularly helpful in finding out if the students actually used the bulletin boards, etc. that they made for this class.
CHAPTER X

HOMEWORK DESIGNED TO PREPARE A STUDENT FOR HIS STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

This 300 level Teaching and Learning class at Western Michigan University is taught by a different teacher than the ones discussed in the previous two chapters. The teacher of this class believes that this class is designed to prepare students for their future teaching experience. In order to accomplish this objective, the teacher has the students do six homework assignments. First of all, he is to participate in a classroom situation for fifteen hours. Secondly, he is to attend a self-instructional audio-visual class which is supposed to teach him how to run a movie projector, a filmstrip projector, a tape recorder, an overhead projector, and an opaque projector. They also have to develop a unit plan, micro-teach for about five minutes and record the lesson on video tape, develop an audio-visual project to supplement the unit plan and they have to write a ten question objective test on the textbooks, The Psychology of Learning in the Classroom by Craig and The Psychology of Discipline in the Classroom by Gnagey.

The assignment where the students have to participate in a regular classroom situation is a departmental requirement. However, the teacher also gives this assignment because she believes that it will provide the student with valuable learning experiences so that

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he will be ready when he becomes a teacher.

The teacher gives the assignment where the student has to attend a self-instructional audio-visual laboratory because it is a departmental requirement and also because it gives the student first hand experience with the various pieces of equipment that they will have to use when they are teachers.

The reason that the unit plan is given is so that the students will have "A learning experience where they are to creatively plan learning experiences for a situation of their choice. It lets them learn how to pull together various resources, how to plan behavioral objectives, and how to design appropriate learning experiences that will reflect behavioral objectives". The teacher said that she noticed that in the past the students will have wonderful behavioral objectives, but they will not have adequate teaching methods to reach these objectives or will not have an adequate test to determine if the students have attained the various behavioral objectives that the teacher wanted them to attain.

The students have to do three micro-teaching assignments. The first one is to a group of about three peers and here they have to teach them a short lesson. This assignment lets them decide on the behavioral objectives that they want their peers to attain and they have to decide how they are going to teach them and how to test to determine if they attained these behavioral objectives. The second micro-teaching experience is to a group of seven of their classmates and the students have to teach the same subject that they taught the first time, but they are allowed to change their teaching methods if
they want to. The third micro-teaching assignment is to the whole class. Here the student also has to decide how he will interest the class in the unit he will teach. The teacher of this class said that she noticed in the past that the students improved considerably in their teaching ability as they went through the three micro-teaching assignments.

The assignments where the student has to make up an objective test on the textbook is given so that the students will gain experience in test writing. From this assignment the teacher believes that the students will find that it is hard to write a good objective test.

These homework assignments were examined by handing the students a questionnaire which asked them their opinions about the homework assignments they were given for this course. The following paragraphs state the questions the students were asked and it also gives a description of the students' replies.

**Question 1:** What is your opinion of the assignment where you participated in a classroom situation for fifteen hours? There were twelve students in the class the day I handed out the questionnaire and each of them wrote that they enjoyed their fifteen hours of participation and that they thought that it was a valuable assignment for students who hope to become teachers.

**Question 2:** What did you learn from the audio-visual course that you didn't know already from previous contact with the five pieces of equipment? Nine (75%) of the 12 students wrote that this assignment was of benefit to them and most of these students wrote
that they liked the assignment because up until now they have not had a chance to work with the audio-visual equipment. Two students wrote that they did not learn anything from this assignment. One student wrote that he thought the assignment was helpful but that he might forget how to run the equipment by the time he does his teaching experience.

Question 3: What did you learn from the unit plan you developed? Ten of the 12 students wrote that they felt that the writing of a unit plan was a useful assignment. They wrote that this assignment taught them how to plan a unit and that it also taught them that teaching is a lot more work then they previously thought. Only two of the students wrote that they did not like this assignment but they did not explain what they did not like about it.

Question 4: Describe your micro-teaching experience and what you learned from it? Eleven of the 12 students felt that the micro-teaching assignment was beneficial to them. The reasons given for liking the homework assignment were, "I learned that others can interpret what you do and say in a different way than what you want so your teaching should be clear", or "I learned to overcome nervousness and tension and to plan something in accordance with objectives". Only one student wrote that she did not learn anything from her micro-teaching experience. However, she did write that she liked the assignment because she felt that it was a good experience to hear how you sound on tape.

Question 5: What did you learn from the assignment where you had to develop an objective test from the books, The Psychology of
Learning in the Classroom, and The Psychology of Discipline in the Classroom? Six of the 12 students wrote that they liked the assignment where they had to develop an objective test. The typical responses from this group were, "It was my first chance to write a test, a good experience", or "I learned how to pick out important ideas and turn them into a question for testing". Four of the 12 students in the class wrote that they did not like the assignment because they were not going to write tests in their fields, or because test writing is common sense or because they did this in a previous course. A fifth student wrote that he did not like the way the assignment was given because he had a difficult time writing test questions, and he would have liked a lot more help in the preparing and wording of test questions. One student did not answer this question.

Question 6: What is your opinion of the books that you read for this course, and if you had to teach this course, would you have chosen these same books? Why? Four of the 12 students wrote that if it was up to them to teach this course, they would have chosen the same two books that this teacher did. Two of these students wrote that they would have chosen these same two books because they did not know any other books in the field to compare these two books with. The other two students wrote that they liked these two books. Five students wrote that they did not care for the books used in this course. The other three students in the class wrote that they liked the book, The Psychology of Discipline in the Classroom, but that they did not like the book The Psychology of Learning.
in the Classroom.

From the students' answers to the questionnaire, it appears that most of the students felt that they learned a lot from the homework assignments given them. However, further research should be done in this area because while the students feel that they benefited from the assignments, they should be tested to determine what they actually did learn from each assignment. Also, it would be beneficial to know how these students will feel about these assignments after they have been teaching a couple of years.
CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

While homework is typically given in a school system, the question of its worth has received very little scientific attention. Perhaps the main reason for this is that so many variables are important to the effectiveness of homework that it is difficult to do a completely scientific study on the subject. For example, even if we do find a basically good homework assignment, we must take into account what the different teachers will do with it and what the various students that the teacher has will do with it.

In Chapter Two, a homework assignment was discussed where the students were given worksheets to do at home in the hope that the extra practice would help the students to better understand the various parts of speech. While the results for this particular classroom showed that this homework assignment was not doing the job that the teacher wanted it to do, it does not mean that this is a bad homework assignment. All we can conclude is that for this class, it did not seem to work. The important thing is that this teacher now knows one method that does not work for her and so she can now try other assignments that might possibly give her more positive results.

The same conclusion can also be reached for the classes discussed in Chapters Three to Ten. The teacher can now look at the
various assignments she has given and can then decide if she is satisfied with the results. If she is not satisfied with the results, she can take another look at the various assignments she has given and can determine what needs to be changed.

In Chapters Six through Ten opinion surveys were discussed. These teachers can now look at what their students thought about their assignments and can look to see if the student's praise or criticism is valid. From this she has a basis for deciding how her class has changed. For example, in Chapter Eight, a class was discussed where one of the assignments given was for the students to write up a teacher evaluation device and the conclusion reached from the answers received on the questionnaire was that most of the students felt that the assignment was just a lot of busywork. The teacher of this class should now look at the assignments he has given and should now try to determine if it should still be given or if it should be changed so that the student will get more out of the assignment. Maybe it will be a good idea for the teacher to discuss this assignment with his students so that he will get a better idea of their opinions about the assignment.

One of the main ideas that this writer has recognized is that the topic of homework is quite complex. In Chapter One there were fourteen reasons given for why homework should be given and there were fourteen reasons given for why homework should not be given. While it's easy for a person to say if homework is either good or bad, it's hard to back up these statements with facts. This research project has tried to show the facts behind the various homework
assignments given. This project has shown that the question of whether homework is good or bad cannot be answered by simply listing reasons either for or against homework. Also, a teacher has to go further than just saying that her assignments are good because she feels that they teach a student certain things. A lot of the answers received on the questionnaires showed that in many cases, there was a great disparity between what the teacher felt her assignments were accomplishing and what the students felt the assignments were accomplishing. This project has shown that some assignments are a benefit to the student and probably these assignments should be given in the future. On the other hand, it was shown that in some cases, it did not matter if the student did the homework or not. In these cases, the class that did not do the homework assignments did as well as the class that did the homework assignments. Consequently, in these cases the fourteen reasons for giving homework listed in Chapter One do not mean much because it did not appear that the student received anything out of the assignments.

One conclusion that can be drawn from the research discussed in this paper is that a lot of teachers have not critically evaluated the assignments they have given in the past. At no time was the conclusion drawn that one assignment was good or that another assignment was bad or should be changed. This is an individual choice that can only be made by the teacher. The important thing is that some teachers now know how effective their homework assignments are and how the students feel about them.
It is hoped that in the future, teachers will start critically examining and evaluating the various assignments they give to see if they are actually accomplishing their purpose.
APPENDIX A

A COPY OF THE WORKSHEETS HANDED OUT IN THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER II
PART I

ADJECTIVES ARE MODIFIERS (TEXT PP. 201-205)

1. An adjective is a word like small, broad, dusty, helpful. Adjectives usually modify nouns.
   A. Draw an arrow from the adjective to the noun it is describing.

   People had deserted the gloomy, dirty street.
   The heavy rain had soon given way to a steady drizzle.
   Thick fog blanketed the wet city, making the late afternoon disagreeable to the unhappy youngsters.
   Flat noses pressed against steamy windows as eager boys looked at the black clouds rolling over the great city.

   B. Insert adjectives of your own choosing in the blanks.

      Underline the noun or pronoun modified by your adjective.

      1. The new pupil is very ________________________________.
      2. Elizabeth can be extremely ____________________________.
      3. She has become more ________________________________.
      4. Those daisies look very ________________________________.
      5. They are quite ________________________________.

   C. Underline the adjectives that follow the verb be.

      Write the subject in the space at the right.

      1. That Saturday was beautiful. __________.
      2. The weather was ideal. __________.
3. It had been rainy for a week. 

4. The class was happy and gay.

5. The picnic would be wonderful.

6. Planned events are often disappointing.

Use the comparative form of the adverb or adjective in a two-sided comparison. Use the superlative form in a comparison with more than two sides.

D. Underline the compared persons or things and insert the correct form of the adjective or adverb in parentheses.

1. The boys are much ________ than the girls. (tall)
2. Rita Ellen is ________ than her sister. (beautiful)
3. Peggy can dance much ________ than Jerry. (gracefully)
4. Saturday's weather was ________ than Friday's. (stormy)
5. Bob hit the ________ homerun of the three. (long)
6. Of all the buildings, the Empire State is the ______. (tall)
7. The hand is ________ than the eye. (quick)
8. Babe Ruth was the ________ of the homerun kings. (great)
PART 2

DETERMINER OR PRONOUN? (TEXT, PP. 206-209)

A. Place each of the underlined determiners under the correct heading below. Write the number of the sentence alongside the word.

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1. In **those** days, the game was played with **nine** pins.
2. **Several** teachers have already used that diagram.
3. **These** wheels are changed every six months.
4. The newcomers wish there was **some** easy way to get acquainted.
5. That room has **seventy-seven** chairs.
6. **This** meat needs **some** salt.
7. Those dishes have seen **many** years of service.

B. Write D for determiner or P for pronoun over each demonstrative, indefinite, or number in the following sentences. Put D for determiner above any articles, too.

1. **Some** cats never scratch.
2. Gert has few friends, Margot has many.
3. The poem brought her several dollars.

4. Dad got one ticket. Mom got six.

5. I never saw that girl so happy.

6. This is a lithograph.

7. Two stone lines adorn the bridge.

8. Both look fierce in a comic sort of way.
PART 3

ADVERBS ARE MODIFIERS (TEXT PP. 210-213)

A. Adverbs are words like now, often, here, sadly, wisely. They usually modify verbs.

The number at the end of each sentence indicates how many adverbs there are. Underline each adverb once.

1. We must all work hard now. (2)
2. Suddenly many rangers appeared here. (2)
3. The captive walked uneasily there before the old tribesman. (2)
4. Slowly and steadily the two freighters sailed together again. (4)

B. Complete each sentence by inserting adverbs in the blank spaces.

1. Our class in assembly sang ____________, ____________, and ________________.
2. We ______________ returned to our classroom and worked ______________ and ________________.
3. All of us listened ______________ and ______________ to the instructions.
4. Mrs. Wagner teaches ______________, ______________, and ______________.
5. We must try ______________ so that we may learn and ______________.

C. Adverbs come (1) at the end of a sentence, (2) at the beginning of a sentence, (3) between the subject and the verb,
(4) within a verb phrase. In the sentences below, first underline the adverb. Then, by putting the right number in the space at the right, tell where the adverb comes in each sentence.

1. She graciously accepted the praise. ______
2. Kathie had neatly worked out the skit. ______
3. Surely the children were pleased with it. ______
4. The skit quickly revealed its point. ______
5. It won the approval of the audience immediately. ______
6. No one had expected as good a skit there. ______
PART 4

SPELLING WORDS WITH -ER, -EST, AND -LY (TEXT, PP. 221)

A. Add -er, -est, and -ly to these adjectives:

1. deep __________ __________ __________
2. wide __________ __________ __________
3. happy __________ __________ __________
4. large __________ __________ __________
5. sad __________ __________ __________
6. soft __________ __________ __________

B. Form an adverb ending in -ly from these adjectives:

1. thin __________ 5. usual __________
2. simple __________ 6. single __________
3. brave __________ 7. careful __________
4. general __________ 8. total __________

C. Put the correct form of the word which is in front of the sentence in the blank space in the sentence.

1. gentle The wind blew very __________.
2. Frequent __________ we have more luck.
3. general The magazine ________ has excellent articles.
4. simple Toshio ________ didn't know the answer.
5. stormy It was the ________session I ever attended.
6. testy The chairman answered rather ________.
7. stout Art's brother was ________ than he.
8. fat We could say that Pete was ________ than Art.
PART 5

PROPER ADJECTIVES (TEXT P. 222)

A proper adjective is an adjective that has been made from a proper noun. A proper adjective begins with a capital letter.

A. Make up a proper adjective from the underlined words. Write it on the line at the right.

1. A team from Germany won the bobsled race. ___________
2. A large group of students from America ___________
   visited universities of Japan. ___________
3. The language of France is beautiful when it ___________
   is well spoken.
4. Three rivers of South America are very long. ___________
5. A plane from Italy flew across the border of ___________
   Canada.
6. All the islands of Hawaii make up our fiftieth ___________
   state.
7. The two women from Australia were on a long ___________
   trip.

B. Make up a sentence containing proper adjectives made from the following words.

1. Ireland _______________________________________________________.
2. West ________________________________________________________
3. Canada ______________________________________________________
4. Australia

5. Poland

6. Portugal

7. Revolution

8. Britain
APPENDIX B

THE UNIT TEST ON THE PARTS OF SPEECH GIVEN TO THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER II
Part 1  In these sentences, underline the adjective once and the
determiners twice. (20 points)

1. Were these fresh eggs?
2. Were these eggs fresh?
3. That was strange.
4. That experience of Buddy's was strange.
5. This is a lovely day.
6. This day has been lovely till now.
7. Gene wore an old blue shirt.
8. There were some signs on the wooden pole.
9. This is a mighty task.
10. These men discovered four rivers.

Part 2  Underline the adverbs in these sentences. (8 points)

1. I never met him.
2. The boy spoke hoarsely.
3. He then spoke calmly.
4. Joan drove the car carefully.
5. The child has run away.
6. Games begin here later.

Part 3  Underline the adjectives once and the adverbs twice in these
sentences. Draw an arrow to the word that each one modifies.
(24 points)

1. Soon Bill was making beautiful shots.
2. Later Herm gave him some helpful hints.
3. His service suddenly became strong.

4. Then dark clouds gathered.

5. The heavy downpour soaked us completely.

6. The older girl giggled constantly.

Part 4 Use the comparative or superlative form of the word at the left of each sentence. (7 points)

1. (destructive) Heat is ___________ than cold.

2. (kind) Mrs. Oglesby is the ___________ teacher in the school.

3. (good) Silk was the ___________ dog we ever had.

4. (noisy) Some children are ___________ than others.

5. (bad) This drought will get ___________ before it's over.

6. (abruptly) That game came to an end ___________ than this one.

7. (clearly) Of the two, Jupiter is ___________ visible

Part 5 Choose the adjective or adverb needed to fill the blank. (7 points)

1. (clear, clearly) Arlene presented a ___________ plan.

2. (perfect, perfectly) She solved the problems ____________.

3. (good, well) Todd ran a ___________ race.

4. (nice, nicely) The children behaved very ____________.

5. (tight, tightly) The rope was ___________ knotted.

6. (careless, carelessly) Simon did a ___________ job.
7. (neat, neatly) Warren will learn to be _________.

Part 6 Write a proper adjective that can be formed from each of these proper nouns. (8 points)

Sweden ________  Africa ________
Australia ________  Greece ________
Japan ________  England ________
Bolivia ________  Korea ________
APPENDIX C

THE GRADES AND SCORES THAT THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS RECEIVED ON THE UNIT TEST SHOWN IN APPENDIX B
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APPENDIX D

THE AVERAGE TEST SCORES THAT THE STUDENTS ATTAINED ON THE EIGHT UNIT TESTS GIVEN IN THE SIXTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER THREE
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APPENDIX E

THE SCORES AND GRADES THAT THE EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH CLASS ATTAINED ON THE TEST ON UNIT EIGHT THAT WAS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER FOUR
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APPENDIX F

THE SCORES AND GRADES THAT THE EIGHTH GRADE ENGLISH CLASS ATTAINED ON THE TEST ON UNIT NINE THAT WAS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER FOUR
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68-D+
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55-F
45-F
45-F
45-F
41-F

SECTION WITHOUT HOMEWORK

87-B
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84-B-
84-B-
82-C+
81-C+
80-C+
80-C+
79-C+
76-C
76-C
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75-C
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74-C
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67-D+
65-D
65-D
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60-D-
60-D-
57-F
56-F
55-F
55-F
52-F
APPENDIX G

A COPY OF THE WORKSHEETS HANDED OUT IN
THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS THAT
WAS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER FIVE
Begin every sentence with a capital letter.
Put a period at the end of every declarative sentence and every imperative sentence. Put a question mark at the end of every interrogative sentence. Put an exclamation mark at the end of every exclamatory sentence.
Follow the rules listed above when you rewrite the following.

Strolling along the beach early in the morning is a wonderful experience. Have you ever done that? The whole shore is littered with the many items that the sea has gathered mysteriously all over the world and dumped right at your feet. Where did this broken beam come from? Who has owned that barrel? Whose was that old shoe? From what boat did this life preserver come? The early morning hours along the beach bring thoughts of faraway places.
PART 2

USING COMMAS (TEXT, PP. 287-291)

And, but, and or often combine two sentences into one sentence. When this happens, put a comma at the end of the first sentence (before the and, but, or).

A. Correctly punctuate these sentences.
1. Rain fell heavily for two days and the river rose very high.
2. Our plane dipped dangerously but the pilot straightened it out.
3. Bring your books to school or take the consequences.
4. John wanted a new ring but he did not save his money.
5. Sue reads a great deal but Frank prefers television.

B. Write six sentences of your own illustrating the rule about and, but, and or.

C. Use a comma to separate words in a series. Punctuate the following sentences correctly.
1. Todd Dick and Harry are a famous trio.
2. They sang dance play instruments and sell programs.
3. Tom is friendly quiet and dependable.
4. Dick is in the glee club in the band and in the choir.
5. Harry recites poetry confidently easily and correctly.
6. He you and I should go to the concert.
7. At the party we laughed sang danced and ate.
Place a comma after yes, no, or well at the beginning of a sentence when a pause follows. Use commas to set off the name of a person spoken to.

D. Properly punctuate the following.
1. John did you read about the music club in our school?
2. Well it was started last week by Mr. Ward.
3. Sally you wrote it up in the class newspaper.
4. Yes you can borrow my copy to read about it.
5. Martin will play the cornet and Frank will play the piano.
6. No Joe we have not had many practice sessions.
7. Well those who can play any instrument are very welcome.
8. We have a violin a piano an accordion and a drum.
9. Yes we are anxious Tom to get new members into the club.
10. Will you Mike ask your father to buy a drum.
11. No we cannot go today Don.
12. Will you come to the rehearsal tomorrow Tom.

An appositive is a word or group of words that means the same as the noun just before it. Set off an appositive by commas.

Separate the parts of a date by commas.
Separate the name of a city from the name of a state or country by a comma.

E. Punctuate these short sentences.
1. I just called Mr. Thursack the plumber.
2. That great day was July 4, 1776.
3. We live in Stratford Connecticut.
4. I saw Fred our bus driver
5. What happened on July 4 1825
6. He was born in Trenton New Jersey
7. The White House is in Washington D.C.
8. Tim graduated on June 24 1965
9. Robert Burns the poet was famous
10. Albany New York is the state capital
PART 3

QUOTATIONS (TEXT, PP. 292-295)

Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation. Put quotation marks before and after the words of the speaker.

Unless a question mark or exclamation mark is necessary, use a comma to separate words like he said from the quotation.

A. Correctly punctuate these sentences.

1. Where shall we go on vacation asked Dad
2. I vote for Yosemite Park replied Bill
3. Why can't we spend some time in San Francisco put in Marie
4. Mother replied we can do both
5. Are your suitcases packed called Dad
6. Let's start loading the car Dave suggested
7. I can hardly wait to go Marie exclaimed
8. Do we have everything Mother inquired

In a broken quotation, these rules apply:

1. Two sets of quotation marks are used.
2. Words like he said are followed by a comma or a period.
3. There is a comma, a question mark, or an exclamation mark at the end of the first part of the quotation. The punctuation mark is put inside the quotation marks.
4. The second part of the quotation begins with a capital if it is the start of a new sentence. Otherwise, the second part begins with a small letter.

B. Follow the above rules in doing this exercise.
Punctuate the sentences.

1. You will see said Tim that the lake is frozen solid.
2. How did you ever know asked Terry where to look for my shoe.
3. There are many things George answered that we find by looking.
4. When you reach the avenue he pointed out you turn left.
5. Ann can go said Mother she has a ticket.
6. If you wish added Mr. Smith I'll go along with you.
7. Joe arrived at school Jim explained three minutes late.
8. In your haste to leave Sally said you forgot your lunch.
APPENDIX H

THE TEST GIVEN THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE
ARTS CLASS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER FIVE
Part 1. Place capital letters and punctuation marks where they are needed.

1. the bitterroot river is in montana
2. what does mr whitney want
3. I dont know jerry replied
4. excuse me sir said freddy but can you tell us where the fillmore avenue bus stops
5. gladys wave already gathered the skirts and patches
6. well lets stop here

Part 2. Rewrite the following sentences, using possessives. (6 points)

1. Those flowers are the property of Alice.
2. The trunks of the elephants kept time with the music.
3. Do they know the address of Helen?
4. The car that my brothers own actually runs.
5. The bars belonging to Dave are made out of maple.
6. The skill that Cliff has is really something to see.

Part 3. Form a contraction for the words in parenthesis. (5 points)

1. We (have) seen enough.
2. They (would not) forget the circus.
3. (It is) no longer raining.
4. (Was) he (not) invited.
5. Dan (does not) like to be alone.
APPENDIX I

THE SCORES AND GRADES THAT THE SIXTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS RECEIVED ON THE TEST SHOWN ON APPENDIX H
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APPENDIX J

A COPY OF THE BOOKLIST HANDED OUT IN THE CLASS DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER SIX


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