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GEVIRTZ HOMEWORK PROJECT HELPS STUDENTS AND RELIEVES STRESS FOR PARENTS

Would a school-based homework center with a certified teacher make a difference in student achievement? A project by UC Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Research Center set out to find out just that.

Although it's too soon to have definitive answers, the first-year results showed that the students participating in the Gevirtz Homework Project did better in math, were more likely to complete their homework, and felt their parents were more interested in their school performance.

"The preliminary outcomes look promising in terms of having positive impact on children both socially and academically. More definitive results will be expected at the end of year three," said Merith Cosden, UCSB professor of education and the project's co-principal investigator with Gale Morrison, who is also a UCSB professor of education.

An unanticipated result of the study was the perception by children in the homework project that their parents showed more interest in their school work, even though parents had much less involvement. One possibility for this finding is that the project may have reduced stressful interactions surrounding the homework issue, because parents knew their children were in a safe environment and homework would not

only get done, but guided by a trained professional. In turn, the children felt that parents were more supportive.

"It's important to realize that this is uncharted territory," said Morrison. "We are studying what sort of impact the project has on student success, and as we gather more information we can begin to understand why." Begun in the fall of 1997 and estimated to end Aug. 30, 2000, the project is an after-school program that follows a diverse group of students for three years (fourth-sixth grades) at three local elementary schools---Franklin, Peabody and Washington---to evaluate the merits of providing on-site after-school assistance with homework and development of study skills.

Students were assigned to either a control group or homework project participant group at each of the schools, and the program began in late fall and early winter. Sessions were held either three or four times per week on site at the end of the regular school day. The participants were given snacks and provided individual and group assistance with all homework assignments.

Student academic performance, students' perception of their own success, and their perception of support from school and home toward their academic achievement were among the indicators the researchers used to evaluate the success of the project.

"By the end of sixth grade, we will be able to articulate better what the students have gained from the project," said Cosden. "The long-term hope is that they take the skills they have learned into junior high school and be successful."

The other researchers on the project are post-doctorate Ann Leslie Albanese and graduate students Sandra Macias and Mari Minjarez.

The Gevirtz Research Center is a K-12/University partnership in conjunction with the UCSB Graduate School of Education, the Santa Barbara School Districts, and the private sector. The aim of the center is to collaboratively design and implement innovative educational programs, research their effectiveness and disseminate the findings to educators and policy makers at the local, state, and national level.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.