Let’s Talk About Homework

Family and Community Engagement Seminar
March 2, 2012

What is Homework?

Defined by Harris Cooper as:

“tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours”

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOMEWORK
Which way is the pendulum swinging now?

**Pro-Homework?**

**Anti-Homework?**

Some questions to talk about?

- Why do teachers give homework?
- Do parents expect kids to have homework?
- What are the problems homework causes for:
  - Teachers?
  - Parents?
  - Students?
  - Schools?
Some Beliefs Behind the Culture of Homework

- The role of the school is to extend learning beyond the classroom.
- Intellectual activity is intrinsically more valuable than nonintellectual activity.
- Homework teaches responsibility.
- Lots of homework is a sign of a rigorous curriculum.
- Good teachers give homework; good students do their homework.

Rethinking Homework. Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs, by Cathy Vatterott

What Does the Research Say?

Homework has generated enough research so that a study can be found to support almost any position, as long as conflicting studies are ignored. Both sides of the homework debate – pro-homework and anti-homework – can cite isolated studies to support their position.

(Cooper, 2007)

Suggested Effects of Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Effects</th>
<th>Negative Effects</th>
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<tr>
<td>Immediate achievement and learning</td>
<td>Loss of interest in academic material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better retention of factual knowledge</td>
<td>Physical and emotional fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased understanding</td>
<td>Period of time to pursue social and community activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better critical thinking, concept formation, information processing</td>
<td>Financial interference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curricular enrichment</td>
<td>Pressure to complete and perform well</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-run academic outcomes</td>
<td>Confusion of instructional techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning encourages time management</td>
<td>Cheating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved attitude toward school</td>
<td>Coping with other student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better study habits and skills</td>
<td>Help beyond tutoring</td>
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<td>Positive self-esteem</td>
<td>Increased differences between high and low performers</td>
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<td>Greater self-direction</td>
<td>Greater sleep disturbance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater sense of organization</td>
<td>Reduced requirements</td>
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<td>More independent problem solving</td>
<td>Reduced potential appreciation of and involvement in schooling</td>
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General Findings of the Research on Homework

• The amount of time spent doing homework is positively correlated with achievement.
• Homework appears to be more effective for older students than younger students.
• As more variables are controlled for, the correlation between homework and achievement diminishes.

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General Findings of the Research on Homework

• At each grade level, there appears to be an optimum amount of homework.
  – Grades 6-9: even a small amount of reinforcement of classroom learning seems beneficial. Achievement continues to improve until assignments last between 1-2 hours a night. Homework longer than that is no longer associated with higher achievement.

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General Findings of the Research on Homework

– Grades 10-12: achievement appears to improve until students are doing 1 ½ - 2 ½ hours of homework a night.
• 10-minute rule
  – Endorsed by PTA and NEA
  – The maximum amount of nightly homework should not exceed 10 minutes per grade level per night, all subjects combined.

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Classroom Instruction that Works – Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

- Identifying similarities and differences
- Summarizing and note taking
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Homework and Practice
- Nonlinguistic representations
- Cooperative learning
- Setting objectives and providing feedback
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Cues, questions, and advance organizers

Four Generalizations to Guide Teachers in the Use of Homework

- The amount of homework assigned to students should be different from elementary to middle school to high school.
- Parent involvement in homework should be kept to a minimum.
- The purpose of homework should be identified and articulated.
- If homework is assigned, it should be commented on.

Research Results for Graded Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Homework</th>
<th>Percentile Gain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework with teachers’ comments as feedback</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graded homework</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned homework but not graded or commented on</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classroom Practice and Assigning Homework

- Establish and communicate a homework policy.
- Design homework assignments that clearly articulate the purpose and outcome.
- Vary the approaches to providing feedback.

Thought as you leave . . .

The needs of individual learners must be the driving force behind all instructional decisions.