

The Homework Debate

Late 1900s	Children in elementary (grades 1-4) rarely received homework. Grammar school students (grades 5-8) typically receive 2-3 hours a night. If students continued into high school, learning was drill, memorization, and recitation, which required preparation at home.
1900 – 1913	Ladies' Home Journal takes up a crusade against homework. The child health and progressive education movements led to an attack on homework for elementary school and junior high students.
1899 – 1915	Various school districts around the country, including San Francisco, Sacramento and Los Angeles, pass anti-homework regulations.
1901	California legislature passes law abolishing homework in grades K-8, and limiting it in high school
1948	National survey shows that median amount of time spent on homework by high school students is 3-4 hours per week
1940's – 1960's	Educational debate shifts from abolishing homework to reforming homework and making it more creative and individualized
1949 – 1955	Progressive education movement comes under attack, charged with being anti-intellectual and insufficiently rigorous. Pro-homework movement forms.
1957	Launch of Sputnik gives pro-homework a boost, setting off concerns that American students aren't keeping up with Russian counterparts
1960's	Parents became concerned that children were not being assigned enough homework in the belief that homework was essential for academic excellence
1983	"A Nation At Risk" denounces "rising tide of mediocrity" in American schools. Three years later, the USDE publishes a pamphlet called "What Works" and concludes that homework does.
Early 1900's	Overwhelming consensus in favor of homework among both educators and general public. Many districts have policies requiring homework. Survey shows level of high school homework hasn't increased, but amount given to kids in elementary school has gone up dramatically.

References

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