


Let's Talk About Homework

Family and Community
Engagement Seminar
March 2, 2012




A black graduation cap with a tassel and a rolled-up diploma tied with a red ribbon are positioned on the right side of the slide. The background features a light-colored checkered floor pattern.

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 black graduation cap with a tassel and a rolled-up diploma tied with a red ribbon are positioned on the right side of the slide. The background features a light-colored checkered floor pattern.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF
HOMEWORK**



A black graduation cap with a tassel and a rolled-up diploma tied with a red ribbon are positioned on the right side of the slide. The background features a light-colored checkered floor pattern.

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
1948 - 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.

Which way is the pendulum swinging now?

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

Positive Effects

Immediate achievement and learning

- Better retention of factual knowledge
- Increased understanding
- Better critical thinking, concept formation, information processing
- Curriculum enrichment

Long-term academic

- Learning encouraged during leisure time
- Improved attitude toward school
- Better study habits and skills

Nonacademic

- Greater self-direction
- Greater self-discipline
- Better time organization
- More inquisitiveness
- More independent problem solving
- Greater parental appreciation of and involvement in schooling

Negative Effects

Satiation

- Loss of interest in academic material
- Physical and emotional fatigue
- Denial of access to leisure time and community activities
- Parental interference
- Pressure to complete and perform well
- Confusion of instructional techniques

Cheating

- Copying from other students
- Help beyond tutoring
- Increased differences between high and low achievers

Cooper, H. 1994. Homework research and policy: A Review of the Literature

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.



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

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.

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

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



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

**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.

Classroom instruction that works: research-based strategies for increasing student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock)

Research Results for Graded Homework

Use of Homework	Percentile Gain
Homework with teachers' comments as feedback	30
Graded homework	28
Assigned homework but not graded or commented on	11

Classroom instruction that works: research-based strategies for increasing student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock)

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.

Classroom instruction that works: research-based strategies for increasing student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock)



Thought as you leave . . .

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