

Homework

Practices That Support All Learners

Since schooling began, homework has been part of a student's life. It has become a common belief that homework is tied to student success and at times, that more homework will lead to more success. However, there is much more known about teaching and learning since homework became the norm over 100 years ago, and there is little research linking homework directly to achievement. In fact, a considerable amount of recent research challenges traditional thinking about homework.

In elementary school particularly, studies tell us traditional homework assignments have little or no significant effect on student achievement. This does not mean that all homework should be avoided, but that younger students learn better when they are able to discuss their learning and have the guidance of the teacher close at hand. Homework that can benefit young children includes reading or being read to, family discussions, playing board games or cooking alongside a parent.

At the secondary level, studies show homework can be related to student achievement, but more homework doesn't necessarily mean better marks. The amount of time spent on homework is not as important to student learning as the quality of the homework assignment.

What is a *quality* homework assignment?

- Purposeful – It is connected to classroom learning and it is not busy work.
- Efficient – It is adequately explained, and it does not take an inordinate amount of time to complete.
- Doable – It is easily understood, with clear expectations for completion; it helps students feel positive about themselves as learners.

- Personalized – It is personally relevant and connected to each student's learning goals.
- Formative – It is intended to be practice and does not count for grades because students are still emerging in their understanding of the content and curricular competencies.

How can I support my child?

- Discuss homework assignments.
- Help your child formulate a plan for completing homework.
- Offer to assist in organizing homework materials.
- Provide an appropriate space for your child to do homework.

How much homework should my child do?

The amount of time a student spends on assigned homework depends on many factors. The same assignment may take one student 20 minutes and another student 50 minutes. In intermediate grades and higher, research indicates small amounts of quality homework have the biggest impact on student learning. Brain research shows the importance of downtime and rest for peak learning efficiency. Children benefit when their time outside of school is balanced to include play, productive hobbies, family time, and downtime.

Reference: *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs*, 2nd Edition, by Cathy Vatterott, 2018, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.