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Does Homework Work?

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Why DO Students Have Homework?

Homework is a topic of debate in school systems all over the country. Homework can and does serve a purpose when assignments are thought-provoking, extend basic concepts learned in class, or promote discovery. However, some parents and educators still feel homework is completely unnecessary and/or interferes with quality time that students and families should be spending together.

Teachers are in control of how much homework they assign. Some teachers assign a lot, others very little, and some, none at all. Students should make their best effort to comply with the requirements of their teachers. Teachers and parents should understand that homework assignments are not so much about the time it takes to complete them or the length of the assignment, as it is the **goal** or **purpose** of the assignment. Parents of struggling students should discuss their concerns with the teacher(s) as there may be alternate ways to complete assignments.

Good homework assignments have a goal and serve a purpose for learning. Good homework assignments should steer the student to a higher level of thinking about the material he/she is learning in class. Today, national and state standards and objectives dictate what teachers are teaching. These standards encourage using higher-level thinking skills that move the student beyond rote learning by memorization and simple comprehension toward the application, generalizing, and evaluation of the lessons' concepts and ideas.



Good Homework Assignments with a Goal and a Purpose:



- Extend what students learn in class. (For example, if students are studying historical presidential debates in school, the teacher may ask students to watch a portion of a debate on television between two candidates currently running for president to prepare for a discussion in class the next day.)

- Are ones that students fully understand how to do on their own.



- Are student driven. If students are learning about the phases of the moon, one might ask the teacher where the moon is currently in its phase. The teacher may suggest that the class look at the sky every night and draw the phases that they see until the moon's phases are complete.



- Reinforce material taught in class on previous days and extend it to lead the student to a higher level of thinking. For example, the student can calculate how much money he/she has and how much more he/she needs to purchase a new electronic device. Then, the student must extend the problem by calculating how many more hours he/she needs to work to make up the difference.



- Are appropriate for the level and learning style of the student. The assignment is not above the independent reading level or math level of the student.



- Are shorter, more frequent assignments that review old material or prepare for learning new material rather than always focusing on what the teacher taught that day.



- Improve retention and understanding of particular concepts. Homework assignments should include reviewing past material to help students comprehend and generalize information to other subject areas or concepts.



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When some students take hours to do what some can do in a few minutes, the assignment does not benefit anyone. One way teachers can help with this is to tier assignments. For example – All students must do Assignment A; doing Assignment B gives you extra credit; and completing Assignment C gives the student extra points on a test grade (or some other benefit). This covers expectations for all students.



Assignment A – Draw a cartoon illustration for five of your spelling words. Each cartoon must include one character using the word in its proper context in a sentence.



Assignment B – Complete Assignment A. Then, write a short poem, paragraph, or create a puzzle using the five words.



Assignment C – Complete Assignments A and B. Then, judge which of your creations is best for studying your vocabulary words, and write a two-sentence summary telling why.

What Can Teachers Do When Assigning Homework?



- Consider the time it may take to complete the assignment.
- Consider the interest/academic level and individual needs of the students.
- Remember that less is more. Short assignments can reveal as much about the students' grasp of the lesson as a long assignment.
- Build homework assignments that align with the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy – **Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, Create** (see more information at <https://bloomstaxonomy.net>)
- Assign what students can do on their own without help.

How Can Parents Help with Homework?



- Set aside a specific time after school for homework, after a short break and preferably before sports practices, art/music/dance lessons, etc. Stick to this time as part of the day's routine.
- Have all materials available – paper, pens, pencils, markers, good lighting, reference books, etc.
- Provide a quiet place with no distractions—away from TV, radio, phone.
- Have your child take a break between assignments, even if it's just to stand and stretch.
- Encourage him/her to do his/her best—always!
- If levels of frustration appear beyond the typical dislike for having to do homework, ask the teacher to give alternate assignments that are more suitable for your child's learning style. For example, if your child is good at art, he/she could make a creative poster about the steps in the water cycle if he/she has trouble composing a paragraph describing the steps.
- Offer your help and guidance if your child truly needs it, but let him/her do as much independently as possible. Don't do the assignment for him/her.

If your child is experiencing stress or problems completing homework assignments, go to the teacher for help. Don't wait! Meet with the teacher and discuss other ways your child may practice the concepts or learn the material. The teacher may alter the length of the assignment, help him/her use different strategies to complete the assignment, or place a limit on how much time he/she should spend working on the assignment. If your child is in special education and has an IEP (Individual Education Plan), it may contain special strategies to help him/her complete assignments. Always communicate with the teacher. He/she can help alleviate the stress or frustration for both you and your child.

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