

Homework: quality, not quantity

Homework has been a fact of life for students since schooling began. It has become a common belief that homework is tied to student success and sometimes, that more homework will lead to more success.

However, there is much more known about teaching and learning since homework became the norm and there is little research evidence 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.



“The amount of time spent on homework is not as important to student learning as the quality of the homework assignment...”

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?

- **Reinforces or extends classroom learning;**
- **Relevant** (connects to the “real world”);
- **Reflects specific student needs / interests;**
- **Purposeful** (connects to learning goals);
- **Provides students choices to reach learning goals** (topics and sharing learning with others);
- **Evaluated for understanding and not graded** (Pre-tests, first attempts and practice should not be part of the child's grade. Written feedback or in-class discussions help children and teachers see how learning is progressing. Completion strategies should be in place for students who struggle to complete homework.);
- **Provides clear expectations for completion;**
- **May involve family members or home context** (e.g. interview parent about family history; check cupboards for items that come from the tropical rainforest)

How can I support my child?

Discuss homework assignments with your child. Ask questions about your child's understanding of the assignment and how he or she plans to complete it. Offer to assist with suggestions for achieving homework goals.

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.*

“Time spent on homework should be balanced with personal and family wellness and the many family obligations experienced in our society today.”
