Homework: Anecdotal Evidence

The idea of eliminating or reducing homework can feel like a radical one. Often, teachers assign homework because they feel like they're supposed to or because they were assigned homework and it's what they're comfortable with. Others worry that parents will complain if students do not have homework. However, administrators and teachers who have tried it report student and parental support and enthusiasm for eliminated or reduced homework.

- Mark Trifilio, an elementary school **principal in Vermont**, and his staff agreed to eliminate homework and asked students to read, play, and spend time with their families instead. The results were impressive to both teachers and parents, who noted that not only was there no evidence of academic backsliding, but that students were happier and more able to explore their interests and hobbies.

- Phil Lyons, a high school **AP history teacher in California**, cut out homework completely, instead choosing to spend the first 10 minutes of class reading and discussing an article relating to the topic the class was covering. The result? Not only were students scoring better on their AP exams, but Lyons noted that his students also began seeking out more information on topics that interested them, often bringing new articles to class of their own volition.

- Jeanne Boiarsky, an **elementary school teacher in Arizona**, was frustrated with students who routinely did not do or turn in homework. She had tried everything from incentives to consequences, but just ended up exasperated, with the same handful of students chronically being penalized for not completing their homework. She experimented with a "no-homework" year. She said: "It was recommended to me and, really, what did I have to lose? I talked to my grade level team and 2 out of the 3 decided to try it as well. This was the best decision I ever made. The kids were - of course - thrilled. But so were the parents! I expected some push-back and complaints. I did not have any. Some parents even thanked me. Grades did not fall, which was also a concern for me. The students did great. I wish I had tried this years ago!"

- Christina Delantoni, a **high school teacher in California**, started by cutting all homework on weekends. Students and parents had such a strong positive reaction to the policy that she then started reducing weeknight homework as well. After two years of continual reductions in homework, there appeared to be no negative academic affect for her students so she went all the way and tried a "no homework" policy for an entire year. Initial resistance from the administration was overcome with a promise to return to homework if her student's test scores were not as high, on average, as in previous years. The gamble paid off. Average student test scores for the year showed no difference than in previous years. "Assigning little to no homework was easier on me, on my students, and on the parents. So if performance didn't suffer, why assign it? That's not to say that my students never had any homework. They had term papers and projects, which of course they sometimes had to work on over the weekend or after school on school nights. And if they didn't use their time wisely in class to get the assigned classwork done, they had to finish it at home. But generally my goal was to assign none. And in the end we were all happier for it."