Homework: Some Research

While it is possible to find conflicting studies about the need for homework at the high school level, there are few if any studies that support the need for homework at the elementary level. And even at the high school level, the studies that support the benefits of homework can only show a weak correlation between homework and achievement. No existing study can show causation. This means that although high school students who complete their homework usually perform better than those that do not, the homework itself cannot be determined to be the reason for the greater achievement. It is just as likely to be a result of other factors, including parental level of education, parental involvement, number of hours of sleep per night, level of self-motivation, and/or study habits.

Below you will find summaries of 5 studies, and links to numerous other studies, that support reducing or eliminating homework at all grade levels.

Study #1:

Alfie Kohn states in his review of over a decade of homework research that "…no research has ever found a benefit to assigning homework (of any kind or in any amount) in elementary school. Even at the high school level, the… correlation between homework and standardized test scores isn't strong, meaning that homework doesn't explain much of the variance in scores…" (Kohn, 2013).

Study #2:

Researcher Timothy Keith, who initially found a solid correlation between high school homework and test scores, revisited this topic ten years later with improved multi-variable equations and found that while there was a "very modest" correlation between amount of time spent doing homework and performance, correlation did not imply causation. He ultimately concluded that there was no proof that homework was the cause of the increased test scores (Cool & Keith, 1991).

Study #3:

Research done by Nancy Kalish found that over-assignment of homework often leads to negative attitudes toward school and learning, particularly when assignments take more than 20 minutes to complete or are "busy work" that make learning a chore. This negative attitude can squash a student's innate curiosity, perpetuate a negative response to school, and negatively impact future learning (Kalish, 2006).

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Study #4:

A 2013 study at Stanford University found that students who spent more than 2 hours a night on homework experienced increases in stress, physical health problems, a lack of balance in life, and even alienation from society. High school students specifically noted feeling that the amount of time they spent on homework prevented them from cultivating other skills and talents, causing them to forego time with friends, family, and hobbies. (Galloway, Conner, & Pope, 2013)

Study #5:

John Hattie's research exposed over 250 factors that influence student academic success. For each factor he found a magnitude of impact, from highly influential to highly detrimental. For example, "mobility" (changing schools or districts during the school year) has a highly detrimental impact on student academic success, with a negative effect size of (-.34). Alternately, "reciprocal teaching" has a highly positive impact, with an effect size of .74. And he found a hinge point of .40. The hinge point was the level at which the factor's influence could be said to be successful in bringing about positive academic outcomes. Over 100 factors scored at or above the hinge point. Homework, with an effect size of .29, was not one of them. (Hattie, 2011)

More Homework Research & Articles

- **Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs.** By Cathy Vatterott
- **Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning**. By John Hattie
- **The End of Homework: How Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning.** By Etta Kralovec and John Buell
- **The Case Against Homework: How Homework is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About.** By Nancy Kalish and Sarah Bennett
- **"Is Too Much Homework Bad For Kids' Health?"** by Sandra Levy www.tinyurl.com/HWandHealth
- **"What Happened When One School Banned Homework – and Asked Kids to Read and Play Instead"** by Valerie Strauss (Washington Post) www.tinyurl.com/ESstudy
- **"The Homework Debate: The Case Against Homework"** by Monica Fugeli (Concordia University – Portland) https://tinyurl.com/againstHW
- **"Teachers Who Have Stopped Assigning Homework"** by Alfie Kohn https://tinyurl.com/TeachersStop
- **"Nonacademic Effects of Homework in Privileged, High-Performing High Schools"** by Mollie Goallway, Jerusha Conner & Denise Pope. https://news.stanford.edu/2014/03/10/too-much-homework-031014/