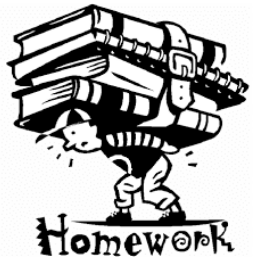
Homework: Compelling Reasons to Reduce

Separate from the research focusing on links, or the lack thereof, between academic achievement and homework, there are other reasons to consider reducing or even eliminating it. While some kinds of homework may have positive academic effects at the secondary level, they also can have detrimental effects.

Homework & Suffering

Many suggest that students who struggle in school also suffer when it comes to homework assignments, as homework consistently takes them longer than their non-struggling peers. In addition, one could argue that having students complete homework rarely tells us anything we didn't already know. For high-performing kids, who already understand what was taught in class, homework is busy work. For low–performing kids, who couldn't grasp what was being taught even with a trained professional educator in the room with them, homework just reinforces that they don't get it. For teachers, monitoring and punishing students for not doing their homework creates extra work and stress, and degrades their relationships with their most vulnerable students. For parents, monitoring and arguing with their children about getting homework done can create negative family dynamics and reduces the opportunity for both family time and/or down time.



Homework & Efficacy

Homework can lack significant value as an assessment of learning because it takes place essentially in a vacuum. Teachers have no accurate way to monitor homework completion, including who actually completed the homework, how long it took, or whether any expected parameters (ex: collaboration or independent work) were met.

Homework & Inequity

Homework can inadvertently perpetuate socio-economic inequality. Some students go home to educated parents and easy access to technology, while others have familial responsibilities, and parents who work at night. For students in poverty, lack of resources at home can mean a very different homework experience. In a 2015 study published in the America Journal of Family Therapy researchers found that in families where parents had limited education, family fights about homework were 200% more likely than in families where parents held college degrees. In addition, students living in poverty or experiencing trauma or toxic stress in their home environments were statistically less likely to complete homework, which they are then penalized for at school.