

Changes in students' homework

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Homework has always been a controversial topic. Towards the start of the twentieth century, Americans were against the idea of homework. This is seen in the publication of Ladies' Home Journal, which argued that homework provides health risks to children prior to the age of 15 (Wright, 2010). The United States' opposition to homework continued until the monumental Sputnik launch. With fear that students were falling behind, there was a call to increase academic workloads and standards (Wright, 2010). The way to do this was through homework. In the years that have followed, the debate over homework has continued, research over its impact has grown, and educators are left questioning what they should be doing. In an effort to uncover what schools ought to do, one must first know exactly what classifies as homework. In a broad sense, homework is any work done outside of a formal academic setting (Davidovitch & Yavich, 2017). For many teachers, parents, and students, homework is a part of the daily routine. Research has shown that it might be too much for students.

For most, homework is seen as one of the best ways to improve academically and prepare for assessment. According to Cooper (2001), however, this is not true for all students. Several studies have looked at the impact of homework and found that while high schoolers and some middle schoolers can experience greater achievement from completing homework, this is not the case with elementary schoolers. Cooper (2001), also explains that elementary schoolers have greater growth from doing homework-like practice in school. This is most likely due to a more conducive learning environment. At home, students have many more distractions to tune out to focus on homework. Young children are not yet at a stage where they can

stay on task amid disruptions (Rønning, 2011). While homework may not lead to greater academic achievement for elementary students, there may be other reasons why elementary students should still receive homework.

It is important to note that academic growth is not the only purpose for homework. In fact, Epstein and Van Voorhis (2001) provide a list of ten purposes that one might have for assigning homework. These purposes are “practice, preparation, participation, personal development, parent-child relations, parent-teacher communications, peer interactions, policy, public relations, and punishment.” In her dissertation, Wright (2010) shares that these fit into three “functions: instructional, communicative, and political.” Instructional includes the practice that was previously discussed, completion of incomplete work, and building of skills that come from just completing work. On top of the content, children learn study skills, time management, and that they have the ability to learn anywhere (Cooper, 2001; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

Many teachers will also explain that homework provides a link between school and home. As parental involvement is an aspect with homework, even more so in elementary grades, parents are provided a glimpse at what their child is learning in school. It has also been discovered that for elementary aged children, parents and teachers serve as the motivation of their learning as young students try to gain their approval (Wright, 2010). The political reasons for providing homework refer to the assigning of homework because it is required by the district or school or because it will make a teacher look

good. While punishment also falls into this category, it is commonly agreed on as a poor choice (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Tam & Chan, 2016).

When looking at the implications of homework, one of the main focuses is on time. Firstly, teachers often state that one reason why homework is necessary is that there is not enough time in the school day to teach everything. Their response is either to make students complete the practice portion of a lesson for homework, have student try to gain the knowledge on their own, or to use homework as a form of assessment. The teacher then has to find the time to check the homework. The result is that teachers become frustrated when students don't meet the expectation on returned homework (Wright, 2010). As soon as homework has been assigned, control is relinquished to parents and students over how the homework is done. Timing also comes into play when it comes to students and parents. One of the biggest complaints of students is that they spend so much time doing homework that they are left with little time for activities, play, and family (Wright, 2010). Parents also complain that their children are losing out on time with family by having to complete homework (Davidovitch & Yavich, 2017; Wright, 2010). The family strain is worsened by the arguing over students not wanting to complete homework. Wright (2010) tells of parents' complaints of the " anger, crying, and frustration they witness from their children during the after-school homework ritual."

Time affects homework so greatly that there has been a plethora of research done on the topic. What was uncovered is that there really is a point at which homework becomes more negative rather than positive. This is known

as the “ Ten-Minute Rule.” A student should only receive ten minutes of work per grade level (Cooper, 2001). Therefore, an average second grader can handle 20 minutes of work and an average sixth grader 60 minutes or 1 hour of homework. This rule is also not true for all students, so the most important thing is for a teacher to get to know her students and what they are capable of. It is also important to recognize that on one assignment, students will all work at their own pace. Students who take more time on homework are typically those who are struggling (Cooper, Robinson, &Patall, 2006). For these students the time set by the “ ten-minute rule” should be adhered to as the maximum. These students are the most likely to develop an aversion to homework from burnout.

With homework practices varying greatly from place to place, there is great need for some more structure. Teachers can start to improve and engage students through interactive homework. Interactive homework gets students to talk with family and friends about things that they are learning in class (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). With traditional homework, parental involvement is important but not a luxury that all children can have. Parents from lower income families are more likely to have multiple jobs and not have the ability to help their children with homework. They are also more likely to have a lower education level. The result of these is that students have a lower level of achievement compared with students of higher income as a result of homework (Rønning, 2011).

One form of interactive homework that revolutionizes parental involvement is a program called TIPS, which stands for Teachers Involve Parents in

Schoolwork (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). The important part is that the parents have an active and well explained role in the homework. In one example, students were asked to read a writing assignment and their first draft with a family member and get feedback. Not only does the parent get to know what a student is working on in class, but they get an opportunity to discuss the topic and return to class with a fresh view. Other guidelines of TIPS are that the assignment has an extended length and set schedule (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). This makes it easier on a parent who may work long hours and cannot always be on top of their child's homework. Some suggest the way to change homework is to make it incorporate online, but one must be mindful of those students who do not have access at home (Tam & Chan, 2016). This is another instance in which knowing the students in the most important in designing homework.

By restricting the time spent on homework and incorporating parents in a hands-on way, we can change homework for the better. Students will maintain a better balance of school, activities, play, and family. This will lead to not only happier students but also happier parents and teachers. With clear expectations, everyone can find a communicative environment conducive to lifelong learning. In order to have clear and achievable expectations, a teacher will have to have an understanding of the lives of his or her students outside of the classroom. This can only help students.