

For Parents

Homework: Applying Research to Policy

Homework Research

Consider these statistics:

- * Research reports that exactly half of parents admit to having a serious argument with their child over homework in the past year that involved yelling or crying.
- * Cross-cultural data disproves the claim that countries whose students do more homework tend to be those with the best test scores.
- * Top performing countries like Japan and Finland assign less homework than U.S. students.
- * Studies have found no significant relationships on grades and test scores based on the amount of homework given or completed. As an educator I believe it is essential to keep up with the latest research regarding how your child learns best. I do this through completing my own homework:
 - *reading at least two professional books a month.
 - *sharing some of my learning through newsletters at least once a month.

30 minutes of nightly reading equals 5,400 minutes, or 90 hours of reading over the school year (excluding weekends).

So What Does This Mean?

Research supports homework that allows reflection, differentiation, and applies higher-order thinking skills. In our classroom the bulk of our homework is devoted to reading books of interest. I support this because:

- * I can provide and receive feedback with your child during our individual reading conferences vs. placing a check mark on a worksheet I skimmed over briefly.
- * Reading creates differentiation for each child in a natural way vs. a worksheet that may meet the needs of a few.
- * Reading homework gets discussed with their classmates through our daily book talks.
- * Reading for long periods of time supports good study habits and learning stamina, as well as a life-long love for reading.



- * As shown below, reading increases vocabulary and test scores. There is also evidence that it leads to an increase of understanding for all content areas. Assigning homework for the sake of assigning homework is strongly avoided, with a emphasis on extensions that will help at home.

Some examples include:

- * If we are learning about fractions, I try to apply our higher-order teaching skills by requesting that you let your child help out with cooking for the night and report about it through writing and talk in class.
- * If we are learning how to read timelines, I may ask your child to interview family members at home with a presentation at school. This type of homework works best in a home setting, and I hope you enjoy this approach too.

Achievement Percentile	Minutes of Reading per Day	Words/Yr.
90 th	40.4	2,357,000
50 th	12.9	601,000
10 th	1.6	51,000

Source: Adopted from Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988 (From Richard Allington's book)

For Parents: How Can You Help at Home?

First of all, thank you for your support at home. Your time spent with your child at home is greatly appreciated when we have video games and TV shows to compete with. Here are some of tips and guidelines to help make homework more productive at home:

- 1) Help set up a consistent organized place for homework to be done.
- 2) Your involvement should be kept to a minimum. For reading, have a natural conversation on the plot, prediction and character development.
- 3) Create a routine in your schedule to complete the weekly planner on what worked and didn't work for the week (handed out Monday). This is optional of course but very helpful for me.
- 4) Encourage, motivate, and prompt your child, but if they can not complete the H.W. on their own, please stop and let me know.
- 5) If your child is practicing a skill, ask them to tell you which steps are easy and which are difficult. Ask your child how they plan to improve. If they can't answer this, stop and let me know.

6) Although there is debate on time spent on homework, especially at the elementary level, I recommend the following regarding time:

a) For reading, do not create an enforced reading time limit. Many teachers usually suggest 30 minutes, but your child may read for longer periods of time. Please monitor the length of reading and encourage them to read more or change books if they are capable of more.

b) It's okay to stop! If a project seems to be taking longer than expected, feel free to stop and go on with your evening. I trust your judgment and know we have the same goals for your child this year.

7) When bedtime comes, please stop your child, even if he/she is not done. The result of having family events, followed by a late evening homework is one tired kid the following day.

8) Students are responsible for reporting the purpose of a homework assignment. This information is written on our board daily.

9) Don't hesitate to contact me. If your child seems to need specific help, as I can provide you additional resources or project ideas. I avoid piles of worksheets in place of motivating alternatives that can be completed at home. The internet and projects are a great place to start.

Name

Date

For Students: What's Expected of Me?

This year:

- 1) Work with your family to set up a consistent organized place for homework to be done.
- 2) You should be able to do your homework with little to no assistance from your family.
- 3) Create a routine in your schedule to complete the weekly reflection log on what worked and didn't work for the week. Do not complete this independently.
- 4) If you don't understand what you are practicing, tell your family what is easy and what is difficult. They might be able to give you a plan of action!
- 5) You are expected to read books of your choice each night. There are many wonderful benefits to reading nightly at home. If you can't find an interesting book, please come see me.
- 6) You are free to borrow a book from our classroom. Please handle it with care and make sure it returns to our library when you are finished.
- 7) If you feel overwhelmed, or feel like crying- stop. Talk to a parent for help. They may suggest you visit a website or stop all together.
- 8) When bedtime comes, please stop, even if you are not done. I need you to be well rested when you come to school each day.

9) Forgot the homework? Find an alternative with your family. E.g. if we are working on geometry, spend some time on an internet site we have used (posted on our site) or find some real-life examples. Please write a note to me on how this time was spent and have your parent(s) sign it.

10) Be ready to discuss what you are reading at home with me during our individual conferences. What's working? What's not? I can help you become a better reader if we work together!

11) Take some time to help your family around the house. I can assure you that being a parent is SUPER hard and expensive. Your family will appreciate the help you give to them, and they will be proud of the maturity you are demonstrating this year.

12) Please limit video games and TV from your diet, as much as possible.

13) Talk to me at anytime if you are having troubles. I am here to help!

I have read and agree to follow these homework standards and guidelines.

Name

Date

