

## What the research says about **HOMEWORK**

### WHAT IS HOMEWORK?

“Tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 1989, p.7 as cited in Hattie, 2009, p. 234). Homework is to be used to practice or reinforce learning that has already taken place.

### WHY THINK ABOUT RESEARCH ON “HOMEWORK”?

Students who have been given appropriately assigned homework have scored 23 percentile points higher than students not given homework according to the seminal metaanalysis of empirical research conducted by Cooper and colleagues (2006) as cited by Marzano and Pickering (2007). Homework has empirically been found to have “positive effects... on attitudinal outcomes [of students] such as self-esteem, liking for school, and feelings of anxiety” (Como, Mitman, & Hedges, 1981 as quoted in Corno, L. 2000).

### COMMON BELIEFS/MYTHS ABOUT “HOMEWORK”

Yet, local school homework policies have been persistently criticized in popular books such as *The Myth of Homework: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*, (Kohn, 2006). While popular, Kohn’s work and that of others, does not cite empirical research to legitimate these claims. [LeTendre](#), professor of Education Policy Studies at Penn State College of Education found that Americans rank in the middle of the globally competitive nations in “amount of homework assigned” (Stevenson 2010).

Homework opponents may have a point, as not all homework is “good” homework [Marzano and Pickering \(2007\)](#). The case against homework cites that “homework is not assigned in appropriate ways, may cause boredom, gets parents too involved, too much pressure, interferes with quality family time,” (Cooper 2010). “Direct parental involvement” in student homework negatively relates to achievement but parental support of autonomous homework student behavior relates positively to achievement (Cooper, Jackson, Nye and Lindsay, 2001; as cited in Hatlie 2009 p. 235); and more is not better when it comes to homework (Trautwein, Koller, Schmitz, Baumert, 2002 as cited in Hatlie, 2009, p.234). Homework has “diminishing returns” [\(Cooper, 2010\)](#); at about 10 minutes per grade level in elementary, 90 minute for middle school students and between 90-180 minutes at high school age students.

### RESEARCH SAYS:

Homework serves the distinct purpose to “provide students with an opportunity to practice,” according to a 25 year quantitative metaanalysis (Cooper, et al 2006). Homework has the highest impact on achievement in high school and the lowest in elementary school (Hattie 2009, p.235). According to Balli (1998) as cited in [Marzano and Pickering 2007](#) practitioners should:

- assign purposeful homework,
- design homework to maximize the chances that students will complete it,
- involve parents in appropriate ways,
- carefully monitor the amount of homework assigned so that it is appropriate to students’ age levels (see above [Cooper, 2010](#)) and does not take too much time away from other activities.

Homework is most impactful in math and had positive impacts on achievement in other subjects when the work assigned was NOT novel or complex (Hattie 2009, p. 235; Eren and Henderson, 2011). “Conceptual and project-based homework” had the least impact on achievement. Higher ability students gain more from homework than lower ability students for whom homework reinforces the negative feelings they have in their struggle with learning (Hattie, 2009, p.235).



## PRACTICAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Educator friendly approaches to research-based purpose and types of homework:

- [Five Hallmarks of Good Homework \(ASCD, 2011\)](#) - Educational Leadership Vol 68, 2011.
- [Teacher Vision: Research Based Homework Guidelines](#)

## SOURCE CITATIONS

- Cooper, H., Robinson, J. C., & Patall, E. A. (2006). Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research 1987-2003. *Review of Educational Research*, 76 (1), 1-62.
- Corno, L. (1996, November). Homework is a Complicated Thing. *Educational Researcher*, pp. 27-30.
- Cooper, H. (2010). Homework's Diminishing Returns. *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/12/12/stress-and-the-high-school-student/homeworks-diminishing-returns>)
- Corno, L. (2000). Looking at Homework Differently. *The Elementary School Journal*, Special Issue: Non-Subject-Matter Outcomes of Schooling [II], The University of Chicago Press Stable, 100 (5) 529-548. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1002283> Accessed: 12-01-2018 04:30 UTC
- Eren, O. and Henderson, D. (2011). Are we wasting our children's time by giving them more homework? *Economics in Education Review* 30 (2011) 950-961.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Kohn, A. (2006). *The homework myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Life Long.
- Marzano, R.J. & Pickering, D. J. (2007). The Case for and Against Homework. *Association for Supervision Curriculum and Development*, 64(6), 74-79. (<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/The-Case-For-and-Against-Homework.aspx>)
- Stevenson, A. (2009). Problem Question: Is Homework Bad for Kids? *Penn State News* online as cited on 09/20/2018. (<https://news.psu.edu/story/141247/2009/08/31/research/probing-question-homework-bad-kids>)
- Strauss, V. (2012). Homework: An unnecessary evil?...surprising findings from new research, *Washington Post*, 09/23/2018. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/26/homework-an-unnecessary-evil-surprising-findings-from-new-research/?utm\\_term=.69815b26cdf9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/26/homework-an-unnecessary-evil-surprising-findings-from-new-research/?utm_term=.69815b26cdf9))
- Vatterot, C. (2011). Five Hallmarks of Good Homework. *Association for Supervision Curriculum and Development (ASCD)*, 68 (*Best of Educational Leadership* 2010-2011), 10-15. (<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/summer11/vol68/num10/Five-Hallmarks-of-Good-Homework.aspx>)

Compiled by Karen Schmidt Klinzing, schm0501@umn.edu, Graduate Research Assistant under the direction of Dr. Katie Pekel in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

Last Updated January 27, 2019