



Indicator: All teachers check, mark, and return homework. (5178)

Explanation: The evidence review confirms that meaningful teacher response to homework can bolster student success as well as punctuate the importance of homework. Checking, marking, and returning assigned homework with feedback that is individualized for each learner validates its worth. Doing so also conveys to caregivers the importance of homework and how homework provides the caregiver and student opportunities to strengthen the curriculum of the home.

Questions: How will the Leadership Team ascertain that teachers respond to homework in ways that communicate the importance of homework to caregivers and students? At what pace do teachers mark, check, and return homework? What homework protocols have teachers across grade and subject levels established? How do teachers supply personalized, formative feedback on homework so that students and caregivers can gauge homework success?

Research has long established the strong influence of a student's home environment on that student's success in school. Less clear has been what schools can do to engage parents in their children's learning. We now have significant, new research that shows that schools can improve their students' learning by engaging parents in ways that directly relate to their children's academic progress, maintaining a consistent message of what is expected of parents, and reaching parents directly, personally, and with a trusting approach (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, & Rubenstein, 1999; Redding, 2000). Homework is a primary point of interface between the school and the home, and parents are best able to support the school's purposes for homework when they understand what is expected of students and their role in monitoring their children's homework. Consistency from teacher to teacher and across grade levels and subjects contributes to teachers', parents', and students' understanding of the school's purposes for homework and also reinforces students' formation of independent study habits.

Source: Sam Redding (2007), *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*

Guidelines for Homework

Homework is most effective when it is used in ways proven to contribute most to student learning and student acquisition of independent study habits. Guidelines for effective homework are:

- Homework must be monitored and followed up.
- Teacher comments on homework are vital; graded homework that counts is most effective. Prompt return of homework by teacher is essential.
- Practice and preparation assignments are primarily the responsibility of the students to complete themselves.
- It is unrealistic to expect parents to play significant instructional roles with homework, especially at the upper grades (Grolnick et al., 1997).

- In the elementary grades, brief forms of parental involvement are desirable (especially those assignments that call for students to show or explain their work to parents and get their reactions).
- Assigning homework for punishment is inappropriate.

Source: Sam Redding (2006), *The Mega System. Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community of the School.*

Evidence Review:

We know that homework is a powerful means for increasing children's learning. We know that homework helps children form the habits of independent study. We know that homework is the school's primary extension into the home. We also know that homework is a source of conflict between many parents and children. Homework is also the topic of complaint many parents raise against schools. Parents who accept the responsibility for seeing that their children attend to their homework are often perplexed that homework practices vary so widely from teacher to teacher. Parents are confused that some educators tell them that homework is important but some teachers do not assign it. They find that some teachers grade homework and some do not. In some classes, homework is counted toward the report card grade and in some classes it is not. Parents are surprised to hear from their children that they have completed their homework at school. What is homework if it is done at school rather than at home?

Because a school community wants its teachers, parents, and students to work in harmony, with clearly understood roles in the education of children, homework is a topic that every school community must address. Because school communities are concerned with children's habit formation, they know that positive habits are best built with consistent reinforcement from home and school. Independent study is an important habit, and homework can be a strong tool for helping children acquire the habit of study.

Research on homework tells us that:

- Required homework is more effective than voluntary homework.
- Having no homework assigned at one grade level adversely affects performance at subsequent grade levels.

- Homework is most effective when returned promptly by the teacher with comments and a grade.

We also know that some kinds of homework are more effective than others. Homework is most effective when it is:

- frequent,
- directly related to in-class work,
- used to master rather than introduce new material,
- graded and included as a significant part of the report card grade, and
- returned to the student soon after it is collected, and marked, with comments particular to the student.

A great quantity of homework is not as important as the regular assignment of homework. A rule of thumb is that students should study at home a minimum of 10 minutes per grade level per day, five days per week. Of course, this time expands when students prepare for tests or write major reports.

How can a school community enhance the benefits of homework? The process begins with a clear policy that states the roles of teachers, parents, and students. But policies are no better than the paper they are written on unless:

- the people to which they apply are given assistance in carrying them out, and
- actual practices are monitored to detect and correct problems.

Source: ADI, *School Community Council Planning Guide*

Evidence Review:

Students learn best when homework is assigned regularly, graded, returned promptly, and used primarily to rehearse material first presented by the teacher at school.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Homework, properly utilized by teachers, produces an effect on learning three times as large as family socioeconomic status. Homework is effective in student mastery of facts and concepts as well as critical thinking and formation of productive attitudes and habits. Homework has compensatory effects in that students of lower ability can achieve marks equal to those of higher ability students through increased study at home. Homework is also a significant factor in differences in achievement test scores.



In addition to its positive effect on academic achievement, homework:

- establishes the habit of studying in the home;
- prepares the student for independent learning;
- can be a focal point of constructive family interaction;
- allows the parents to see what the student is learning in school;
- competes with televiewing rather than with constructive activities in most homes;
- extends formal learning beyond the school day;
- enables the student to reflect on material and become more intimately familiar with it than is often allowed in a busy, sometimes distracting school setting; and
- provides the teacher with a frequent check on the student's progress.

Research is helpful in establishing expectations for teachers in the effective use of homework. A study of the effectiveness of homework in mathematics, for example, concluded the following:

- required homework is more effective than voluntary homework;
- having no homework assigned at one grade level adversely affects performance at subsequent grade levels; and
- homework is most effective when returned promptly by the teacher with comments and a grade.

Other studies attest to the importance of the teacher grading and placing written comments on homework. Daily homework assignments have been found superior to less frequent assignments.

APPLICATION

The effects of homework do not increase proportionately with the amount assigned, but rather with the frequency (or regularity) of its assignment, the nature of the assignment, and the teacher's attention to the student's work. Homework is most effective when it is:

- frequent;
- directly related to in-class work;
- used to master rather than introduce new material;
- graded and included as a significant part of the report card grade; and
- returned to the student soon after it is collected, and marked with comments particular to the student.

Schools facilitate parents, students, and teachers in their efforts with homework by establishing a school-wide standard for frequency and quantity of homework. For example, some schools expect about ten minutes of homework each school night for first-graders, and elevate the expectations by an additional ten minutes for each year of school. This is a good way to gradually and consistently develop homework habits.

REFERENCES

Austin (1976); Elawar & Corno (1985); Keith (1982); Page (1958); Page & Keith (1981); Paschel, Weinstein & Walberg (1984); Walberg (1984).

Source: Sam Redding (2000), *Parents and Learning*.

Austin (1980) states, "Both graded homework and classroom discussion of homework can provide feedback on students' work. Feedback should be given as soon as possible after a response" (p. 71). His study concludes "that allowing student questions on homework before it is collected is superior to allowing student questions on homework only after it is collected, graded, and returned. This supports the argument that the sooner the feedback is given on homework the better" (p. 74).

In his 2009 book *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement*, Hattie found the overall effects of homework are positive, though there are certain moderators, including:

- One researcher argued that, the older the student, the more useful the homework.
- Up to a point, increasing the amount of homework did not lead to greater achievement
- Parent support for homework has a positive effect on achievement, whereas direct instruction by the parents can have the opposite effect.
- Task-oriented homework, such as the rehearsal of basic skills, has higher effect than homework requiring deep learning or problem solving.
- Task-oriented homework's effect was higher when the homework was not complex or had a novelty aspect.
- Projects were one of the least effective forms of homework.
- A large amount of homework or lack of monitoring tends to lower student achievement with, for many students, homework reinforcing the fact that they

cannot learn by themselves and cannot do homework.

- Effects are higher when involving rote learning, practice, or rehearsal of subject matter.

Hattie (2009) suggests the reasons for the differences between younger and older students when it comes to homework may include: younger children are less able to ignore irrelevant material or stimulation in their environment, they have less effective study habits, and they may receive little support from teachers or parents.

Marzano (2007) finds homework to be a strategy providing students opportunities to deepen their understanding of content and gain proficiency with their skills, while giving the students a chance to practice and review what they've learned.

Marzano's generalizations about homework include:

- the amount of homework assigned to students should be different from elementary to high school;
- parental involvement should be kept to a minimum;
- the purpose of homework should be identified and articulated; and
- if homework is assigned, it should be commented on.

He recommends teachers:

- Establish and communicate a 'homework policy', including the purpose of the homework, the amount likely to be assigned, consequences for non-completion, and acceptable levels of parental help.
- Design homework assignments that clearly articulate the purpose (to practice skills, apply skills, find new information, create something, elaborate on things covered in class, etc.) and outcome.
- Vary the approach to providing feedback (with specific, timely feedback being vital, but since it is not always feasible for teachers to comment on every assignment, having a mix of teacher feedback, student feedback, self-assessment, sharing with a buddy, sharing with the class, and comparison to success criteria as different ways of providing feedback.

As a concrete example, Houghton Valley School (2012) of Wellington, New Zealand logically asks: What does this mean for Houghton Valley School? It's answer:

1. Juniors and seniors should not be expected to do the same amount of homework.
2. Teachers should not give too much homework. We have agreed on guidelines for this.

3. The tasks may need basic parent support and encouragement, but parents shouldn't be expected to be teachers. The homework should be relatively easy, but not too easy.

4. Homework can be used to practice and apply skills learnt at school—and therefore be useful in the sense that practice of a sport or musical instrument is useful.

5. 'Projects' should be rarely given out as homework, although 'novelty' homework that is a change from the norm may promote engagement.

6. Feedback about the homework tasks is important. This may be related to learning intentions and success criteria. It should be linked to achievement in other areas. Reward effort.

7. If homework causes problems for a child, teachers should find a way to assist—e.g., modify it, lessen the amount, provide direct assistance, chat to parents.

8. If for any reason a parent communicates that his/her child is unable to do homework (e.g., sick, tired, parents don't feel homework is useful, too busy, need a break), teachers should go with the parents' wishes and excuse the child from doing the homework.

9. Teachers should chat to their students about how to approach completing the homework tasks and offer support for those who need guidance or do not have encouragement at home.

References and Resources

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