

The Facts on Education

How Useful is Homework?

Parents, children, and teachers have always argued about homework! Common questions include: Should teachers give homework to students? If so, how much and what type of homework should be assigned? How much time should students spend on homework? What roles should parents play in their child's homework?

Quite a bit of research has been done over the decades on homework, but researchers still hold divergent views on the subject.

The best current evidence is that homework seems to have a small positive influence on student achievement, though it may be that students with better grades just tend to do more homework. For high school students, the benefits of homework increased as the time spent on homework increased, up to about two hours of homework a day, but any time spent beyond that showed decreased benefits. The evidence for a positive impact of homework on student achievement in the primary grades is weak, although some evidence suggests that homework may help students develop good study habits and foster positive attitudes toward school and learning.

The amount of homework assigned is less important than the quality and value of the work being done. Assigning homework only has value if the work contributes to students' learning and engagement. Studies show a wide variation in the kind and quality of homework assigned and in its perceived importance or value by students and parents.

Parents can also play an important role by supporting their children's learning at home, encouraging learning outside of school, and monitoring their children's progress regularly. It is important to be positive and encouraging when working with your children on homework; if homework leads to bad feelings between parents and children it can have negative effects on both school and home relationships.

There are numerous online resources available to help parents with homework. A few of these, as well as the research references that inform this issue, can be found at:

www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education

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