**Synthesis of Research Findings on Homework**

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*Note from Jane Bluestein: An angry middle school teacher wrote to Chick Moorman and Thomas Haller, asking them to defend the research cited in previous newsletter articles, (*[*two of which are included on this site*](http://www.janebluestein.com/articles/hw_research.html#moorman_link)*). Although they stated that the “burden of proof clearly falls on those instituting the strategy,” they were willing to provide research finding that led them to the stand they take in their other homework articles. They invited this teacher to compare research that defends the use of homework as a learning strategy with the information below. I’m grateful for the work these two colleagues have done and wanted to add the following to the* [*other articles*](http://www.janebluestein.com/articles/hw_research.html#other) *on homework on this site.*

1.) From 1997 to 2002, the proportion of six-to-eight-year-old children being assigned homework on any given day went up from 34 percent to 64 percent. Children of that age more than doubled their weekly time studying during those same years. (Hofferth, Sandra L. and John F. Sandberg, “How American Children Spent Their Time,” *Journal of Marriage and Family,* February 20, 2002.) These researchers confirmed that time spent doing homework was not associated with higher or lower scores on any achievement tests.

2.) There is no evidence that any amount of homework improves the academic performance of elementary students. There is only a moderate correlation between homework and achievement in middle school. Even in high school too much homework may diminish its effectiveness and become counterproductive. (Cooper, Harris, Jorgianne Civey, and Erica A. Patall, “Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003.” *Review of Educational Research,* 76, 2006, 1-62.) Cooper’s research review correlating time spent on homework with test scores and grades revealed “nearly nonexistent” effects for grades 3 through 5. The correlation was extremely low for grades 6 through 9.

3.) “If research tells us anything [about homework, it’s that] even when achievement gains have been found, they have been minimal, especially in comparison to the amount of work expended by teachers and students.” (Barber, Bill, “Homework Does Not Belong on the Agenda for Educational Reform,” *Educational Leadership,* May, 1986, 55-57.)

4.) A Trends in International Mathematics and Science study looked at 27 states and 37 other countries. They found “there was little relationship between the amount of homework assigned and the students’ performance.” (Mullis Ina V. S. Michael O. Martin, Albert E. Beaton, Eugenio J. Gonzalez, Dana L. Kelly, and Theresa A. Smith. Mathematics and Science Achievement in the Final Years of Secondary School : IEA’s Third International Mathematics and Science Report, Boston: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, 1998.)

5.) Many of the countries with the highest scoring students on achievement tests, such as Japan, Denmark, and the Czech Republic, have teachers who assign little homework. It seems that the more homework a nation’s teachers assign, the worse that nation’s students do on the achievement tests. (Baker, David P. and Gerald K. LeTendre, National Differences, Global Similarities: World Culture and the Future of Schooling. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.)

6.) “There is no research to support the belief that homework helps students to develop any of the characteristics that appear under the heading of work habits.” (Kohn, *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing,* Da Capo Press, Cambridge, MA: 2006)

7.) “There has been no research done on whether homework teaches responsibility, self-discipline, or motivation. That’s just a value judgment. The counter argument can just as easily be made that homework teaches kids to cheat, do the least amount of work, or to get by.” (Kralovec, Etta and john Bruell. The End of Homework: Hoe Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning. Boston: Beacon 2000.)

8.) American teachers lead the world in grading homework, with 82 percent giving it marks. Only 22 percent of teachers in Hong Kong, 14 percent in Japan, and 6 percent in Germany grade homework. (Baker, David P. and Gerald K. LeTendre, National Differences, Global Similarities: World Culture and the Future of Schooling. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.)

9.) A national survey conducted by the University of Michigan found that family meals are the single strongest predictor of better achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems for children ages three to twelve. It was a better predictor than the amount of time spent studying. (Bennett, Sara and Nancy Kalish. *The Case Against Homework: How Homework Is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About It.* Crown Publishers” New York: 2006, 60.)

10.) Homework practices tend to be based on individual teachers’ beliefs rather than on consensually agreed upon research-based practices. (Byran, Tanis, and Karen Burstein. “Improving Homework Completion and Academic Performance: Lessons from Special Education,” *Theory into Practice,* 43, 2004: 213-219.)

11.) Harris Cooper states, “There is no homework system or explicit rules for homework. You won’t find a system in schools of education and you won’t find it in the schools where only one in three districts even has a homework policy. Most teachers are winging it.” (Cooper, Harris, James L. Lindsay, Barbara Nye, and Scott Greathouse. “Relationships Among Attitudes About Homework, Amount of Homework Assigned and Completed, and Student Achievement.” *Journal of Educational Psychology.* 90, 1998: 70-83.)

12.) The University of Minnesota’s Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement issued a report in 1994 that said, “It is surprising how little attention is paid the topic of homework in teacher education. Most teachers in the United States report . . . they received little training in how to devise good assignments, how to decide how much homework to give, and how to involve parents.”

13.) In a 2003 California State University at Fullerton study of teachers of all grade levels, every single one believed in giving homework--despite the fact that not one of their schools or school districts had ever studied whether their system was really working. According to Professor Stephen Aloia who conducted the survey, “These teachers have no data to support their assumptions that homework is beneficial, they simply think it is beneficial.”

14.) “Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time that should be devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents.” (American Educational Research Association)

15.) A survey done by Public Agenda, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group, found that 50 percent of parents surveyed said they have had a serious argument with their children over homework. Thirty-four percent said it became a source of struggle and stress for them and their children. (Bennett Sara and Nancy Kalish. *The Case Against Homework: How Homework Is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About It.* Crown Publishers” New York: 2006, 60.

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