

Does homework matter? What does the research say?

September 4, 2012 By [Miranda Walichowski](#)

Homework is back! Many parents have asked me questions about homework time. Children do not want to do homework. Parents want them to do homework because they feel that it makes them responsible, helps them learn, and because the teacher assigned it. Some parents report that homework time negatively affects their relationship with their children. Children report that they are too tired to do their homework. Is it worth it? Does homework matter? What does the research say? That is what we will examine in Part 1 of this Homework Series.

John Hattie (2009) did a mega meta-analysis on 5 homework meta-analyses. This means that he evaluated 161 studies involving more than 100,000 students. In essence, these studies compared performance of students in classes where homework was prescribed to students in classes where homework was not prescribed. And the findings show that the use of homework:

- was associated with advancing children's achievement by approximately one year
- improved the rate of learning by 15%
- showed that about 65% of the effects were positive (improved achievement)
- showed that 35% of the effects were zero or negative (didn't hurt)
- and showed that the average achievement level of the students in classes that prescribed homework exceeded 62% of the achievement of those students who were not prescribed homework. (p.8)

John Hattie gives us another way to look at his findings. He stated "...so that in 21 times out of 100, introducing homework into schools will make positive difference, or 21 percent of students will gain in achievement compared to those not having homework. Or, if you take two classes the one using homework will be more effective 21 out of 100 times" (2009, p.9).

Why is the effect of homework not higher? If it is not higher, then why do teachers continue to assign homework? There are factors that make it difficult to test the effect of homework. That is why you will find researcher in favor of homework and others not.

First of all, it is difficult to design a truly experimental and longitudinal study. Imagine a researcher going to a school personnel and parents and saying we would like to study the effect of homework on your children. We are going to divide them into two groups. These groups will be about equal in terms of make-up (gender, social economic class, parent education levels, motivation, intelligence, and etc.). We also want their teachers to be at the same level of competence, have the same teaching style, etc. One group will never do homework for the duration of their education and the other will do homework on a regular basis. Then after 13 years or so, we will see who fared better. (Fared better on what measure? That is an entire discussion in itself).

I see it this way. As someone who teachers in a program to prepare teachers, works closely with mentor teachers, taught in public schools, and as a parent of 4 children, I am not ready to throw homework out the window (on most days!). Perhaps, we just need to do things differently as teachers, as parents, and as students to ensure that homework time is learning time (short, effective, painless).

Found 2/8/14 from: <http://www.miranous.com/does-homework-matter-what-does-the-research-say/>

References

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. NY: Routledge.