



Homework: Expectations for You and Your Child

Parental Roles

One of the most frequently asked questions regarding homework is, “how much time should I expect my child to devote to after-school studies?” A good rule of thumb is ten minutes per grade level (second grade = 20 minutes, sixth grade = 60 minutes). Homework is a student’s responsibility but the home environment plays a critical role.

1) Discuss homework assignments and grades in ways that instill self-worth and respect. Although your feelings are important to your child, it is even more important that they personally feel a sense of pride in their work. A parent’s approval or disapproval

often has great impact on how the child feels. When your child shares grades with you, ask them how “they” feel, placing the focus on their capabilities and efforts. *How do you feel about the grade you made? Do you feel you did your best? You worked so hard; are you proud of yourself?*

2) Many of us have struggled with a certain area of study, quite commonly math. Keep encouraging your child to do their best by saying things such as, “I know you can do it!” “Try not to let any of your own negative experiences keep you from supporting and encouraging learning” (NEA, 2008).



“Make studying, not just homework, but a daily habit” (NEA, 2008)

3) Support good homework practices by providing a quiet place to study. Homework should be done in the same place everyday – desk, table, by a window, next to a lamp (KidsHealth, 2008). Every child is different and preferences will not be identical, even with siblings.

Television is Tempting

Although your child may beg to complete homework with the television on, most educators strongly urge against it stating that “it’s best to leave the television off during homework time” (NEA, 2008). You may hear every reason to leave the television on, but “research shows that American children on average spend far more

time watching television than they do completing homework” (NEA, 2008).

When your child is reading or working math problems, he or she needs to concentrate; “keep the distractions to a minimum” (KidsHealth, 2008). Reading means the reader is comprehending the author’s in-

tent and purpose and using textual clues to solve unknown words. When working on math, a simple mistake can lead to a wrong answer. Concentrating on each step assures successful completion and understanding. For study to be effective, children must be thoroughly focused on their work.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Is it okay to leave the television on while doing homework?*
- ♦ *Working with the school, specifically your child’s teacher.*
- ♦ *What is the purpose of homework?*
- ♦ *Your child’s school day.*
- ♦ *A parent’s role in a child’s academics.*

School Concerns

As your child progresses to higher grade levels, you may question the nature or practicality of a school assignment. Your attitude may be reflected by your child and negatively impact their performance. Avoid talking in front of your child about concerns you have with their teacher. If you suspect too much homework is being assigned, or not enough explanation has been provided, give the teacher an opportunity to explain.



“Teachers want children to learn and want parents and families to be involved in their children’s education.”

(NEA, 2008).

When you criticize a teacher’s assignments in front of your child, be prepared for them to balk at future homework assignments. Strive to maintain a home-school relationship that fosters a sense of respect for both their teacher and work assigned. More importantly, begin the year by asking “about homework policies and how you should be in-

involved” (KidsHealth, 2008).

There are many ways to contact your child’s teacher(s). You may call and leave a message requesting for your call to be returned. If you would like a conference, you may make arrangements for a one-on-one visit. Teachers want to hear your concerns and answer your questions and can usually meet with you before or after school or during their conference time. One of the great advantages of the current state of technology is that teachers may conveniently correspond through email as well.

Why Give Homework?

Homework is assigned by your child’s teacher to be completed outside the classroom environment. For centuries, homework has been given to “improve students’ grades and understanding of their schoolwork” (NEA, 2008). There are generally three reasons for assignments to be completed at home. Homework gives students an opportunity to: a) review or practice work completed or learned in class; b) verify understanding of subject material; and c) “find and use more informa-

“Your children’s teachers can tell you how much time they expect students to spend on homework.” (NEA, 2008)

tion on a subject” (NEA, 2008).

There is value in independent study and educators have established that “the academic benefits of regular,

meaningful, homework increase as children move into the upper grades” (NEA, 2008). Research papers, oral reports, book reviews, and projects that require more effort and time in preparation serve the additional purpose of teaching time management and personal responsibility. In successfully completing homework, students “develop pride in a job well done and a work ethic that will benefit them well beyond the classroom” (KidsHealth, 2008).

Choice = Power

Allow your child to make choices regarding homework plans. When a child feels they have some level of authority, they are more likely to accept the assignments to be completed. Snacks should be healthy but give your child the choice, for example, of an apple or a banana. “Some kids work best in the afternoon, following a snack while others prefer to wait until after din-

ner” (KidsHealth, 2008). Breaks should be taken with your child’s choices in mind. Some children need short, frequent breaks while others desire longer, less frequent breaks in time. Choices give your child ownership of their own learning and a feeling of con-



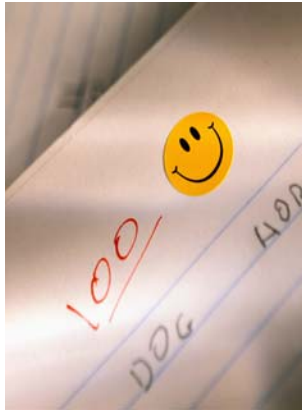
“People have different learning styles.”

(KidsHealth, 2008)

trol. “Keep the focus child specific. School success come easily for some students; for others, school learning is tougher (NWREL, 2008).

My Child Hates Homework

Homework can be an on-going struggle for students. "It's normal for students not to want to do their homework" (NEA, 2008). Children whose parents show interest and are willing to assist with assignments tend to have a better attitude. A parent's involvement is a great way to stay in touch with what is being learned in school and "it shows your child that the school



Remember: There's more to a grade than the numerical value.

and home are a team" (Ed.gov, 2008). Children will begin to understand that accomplishment is a product of hard work and determination; "it's a kid's job to do the learning" (KidsHealth, 2008).

When graded assignments are brought home, ask about them. If your child brings home a 100, you may remark, "You must have really understood this assignment.

Tell me about it!" On the other hand, if a low grade is received, avoid an immediate, negative comment. Rather than asking, "Why would you think that is the correct answer?" try, "Good job on answers two, seven and ten. We missed some of the other questions. Let's look at this together and see where we went wrong." Using words such as *we* and *us*, affect a partnership that is based on redirection and affirmation or sometimes both. "Children sometimes need to be reminded that it is okay to make mistakes because it only helps us get better" (NWREL, 2008).

Nothing Happened!

What is the most commonly asked question by parents at the end of the school day? You guessed it! *What did you do in school today?* And what is the most frequently heard answer? You guessed right again! *Nothing!*

Homework is one way to enter a child's school environment without stepping over the boundaries he or she may equate with "prying." Instead of asking generalized ques-

tions, ask direct questions that lead to specific answers and offer valuable information. "Ask about assignments, quizzes, and tests" (KidsHealth, 2008). *Did you turn in your homework? Have you received your science grade? How was the math test? How do you think you did on your book review?*

Your child is not purposefully leaving you out but there are likely just too many details to remember. By

"Get involved in your child's academic career."

(KidsHealth, 2008)

using homework as a bridge for communication, it's easier for your child to recall their day and give you informative answers.

Start at Home

Regardless of whether homework is assigned, require your child to read or practice math problems. The message should be clear that school is a priority "with ground rules like setting a regular time and place each day for homework to be done" (KidsHealth, 2008). While planning for homework, do so with "a strategy that fits their workloads and temperaments" (KidsHealth,

2008). Begin teaching organizational skills while children are young and learning in a single classroom environment. As children grow older, and are exposed to "multiple teachers and classrooms in middle school," homework planning and organization



"Assume that your children will have studying to do every night."

(NEA, 2008)

become more challenging (KidsHealth, 2008). When students complain about homework, it can be helpful to "apply school to the 'real world,'" for instance meeting deadlines, balancing budgets or reading for enjoyment (KidsHealth, 2008).

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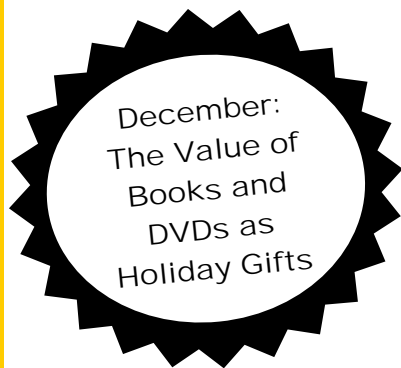
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Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

September Q&A

Q: My child struggles with homework assignments and I think it may be more than "homework blues." What steps should I take next?

First, make sure the study atmosphere and daily habits are conducive to completing assignments. If your child is forgetting or not writing down classroom assignments, purchase a notebook or folder and ask that every assignment be written down. This will help you, and your child, plan for future projects and tests. If a particular subject is giving your child difficulty, try speaking to the teacher. "But when a kid consistently has a hard time understanding or completing homework, there may be broader issues, such as learning disabilities, or vision or hearing difficulties that may be interfering with academic progress (KidsHealth, 2008). If you feel there's a deeper problem, don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher. "Remember, you and their teachers want the same thing – to help your children learn" (NEA, 2008).



Resources:

KidsHealth. "Helping Your Gradeschooler With Homework."

http://kidshealth.org/Parent/positive/learning/help_gradeschooler_homework.html (accessed November, 2008).

KidsHealth. "Homework Basics." <http://kidshealth.org/Parent/positive/learning/homework.html> (accessed November, 2008).

KidsHealth. "How to Make Homework Less Work."

http://kidshealth.org/Parent/positive/learning/help_gradeschooler_homework.html (accessed November, 2008).

National Education Association. "Help Your Student Get the Most Out of Homework." <http://www.nea.org/parents/homework.html> (accessed November, 2008).

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. "Easy Ways for Families To Help Children Learn." <http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/publications/pdf/ways.PDF> (accessed November, 2008).

U.S. Department of Education. "Homework Tips for Parents."

http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/homework/part_pg2.html (accessed November, 2008).

