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## Evaluating the effects of homework versus no homework to determine the role it plays in the education of students

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF  
HOMEWORK VERSUS NO HOMEWORK  
TO DETERMINE THE ROLE IT PLAYS  
IN THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Administration  
University of Dayton  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education

by

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Dayton, Ohio  
June 1990

Approved by



Official Advisor

*J*

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to our families. Without their support it would have been impossible. It was for our husbands and children that we decided to pursue our Master's Degree. We hope to demonstrate how important an education can be.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Justification of the Problem

After reviewing some literature dealing with homework the writers find there needs to be more emphasis placed on the quantity, quality, and effectiveness of homework assignments. Homework plays a role in our schools affecting parents, teachers, and students. As we learn and understand more about homework the more beneficial it will be for everyone involved.

As teachers, the writers have always been concerned with homework as an aid to help children learn material and to help those having difficulty. Homework should be given with the intention to help students, not just keep them busy.

In the past years of teaching the writers have heard many complaints about homework. These complaints were from students, parents, and teachers. Students complain that it interferes with their extra-curricular activities and that it is too time consuming. Parents have said that they are unable to help their children due to a time limitation or that they lack knowledge of the subject. Teachers have complained that homework means too much extra work for them. The writers believe that homework does not have to be negative, but can be used to help students be more successful in their studies at school.

The writers believe that researching homework will not only benefit them but will be of value to their students, parents, and the school. Today's curriculum covers so many subjects that the writers believe homework is essential in order to have enough learning time devoted to each subject. (Strother 1984)

Through this study the writers hope to determine if homework assignments are beneficial in helping students learn material and whether grades are higher for students who do homework assignments.

#### Problem Statement

The purpose of this project is to determine the effects of homework versus no homework in the education of students in primary grades (first, second, third).

#### Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the test scores of children who have been exposed to a program of homework versus no homework.

## Procedures

### Subjects

The subjects of this study will be students in grades one, two, and three. There will be twenty-eight first grade students, twenty-five second grade students, and thirty third grade students.

### Setting

The study will be carried out in the first, second, and third grade classrooms at West Union Elementary. The school is located in Adams County, in a rural area, in the Ohio Valley Local School District.

### Methodology

The students in the first, second, and third grades will be divided into two groups. One group will be given homework over a four week period in reading and the other group will have no homework required for class. The students will be tested over each unit covered in that time period. Results of all tests will be kept in a file. Then the students will change roles; those who had no homework will have homework, and vice versa. After the two month period the results will be checked to determine if homework had any effect on how well students did on examinations.



### Definition of Terms

Homework is the out-of-class task that a student is assigned as an extension of classwork.

Assignments are anything assigned, as a lesson or task.

Curriculum is the courses of study offered at a school.

Learning Styles is the manner in which a child learns material.

Feedback is the return of part of the output.

### Results

The results will be tabulated on a chart, comparing test results with and without homework for each student. Data will be subject to the T test.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the last ten years the issue of homework has been a concern of teachers, parents, students and school administrators. There have been many varied opinions and strategies concerning pros and cons of homework. An important question that often occurs dealing with homework is: Is there more concern for the amount of time spent on homework than for what is being accomplished through the assignment itself? (Koppman 1984) Researchers find that there needs to be more emphasis placed on the quantity, quality, and effectiveness of homework assignments.

Homework has been seen in many ways: as a task for those children having difficulty in a particular skill area; as an after school chance to finish incomplete work; or as an activity to keep a child busy at home. Homework should be given with the intention to help students, not just keep them busy.

In the past years there have been many complaints from teachers, parents and students. Teachers feel that homework means too much extra work for them. This extra work involves making copies of practice pages. The teacher needs to grade or check the homework. Homework must correlate with subjects being taught. Teachers feel that all students do not have sufficient help at home. The reasons for this

are both parents working away from home, many single parent families, and other home activities that are not school related. Homework is not always a true example of students' individual work. With homework you never know who has done it--the student, a parent, brother, or sister. (Hunter 1984) Some teachers question its educational value but fear the consequences from parents and supervisors of not assigning homework. (Roberts 1985)

Parents have said that they are unable to help their children due to a time limitation or that they lack knowledge of the subject. The parent who has been faced with a son or daughter who has brought home work that he or she is incapable of completing without further in-school guided practice is immediately involved in a situation filled with negative potential. Both the parent and the child feel inadequate. The parent struggles to help by re-creating at home the school situation he or she knew as a child. The paradox of wanting Johnny to learn, but thinking that learning has to be something short of exciting, stimulating, and fun to share, frustrates many an adult. And the child, sensing the parent's frustration, feel deficient. (Koppman 1984)

Students feel that homework interferes with their extra curricular activities and that it is too time consuming. After a busy day, many students may not be motivated to start their work. Some students have been assigned homework as punishment or as busy work requiring pages of repetitious

answers. Children may not have access to the required sources needed to complete the assignment. This can cause hardships for both student and parent. The home environment may not always be suitable for studying. With many distractions such as television, stereo radio, and siblings this can hinder the performance of the student's homework. Many times the student does not have anyone available to help or check over the work that he/she has completed. Sometimes the assignment is not explained clearly by the teacher. This means more frustration for the student.

In contrast to the preceding research findings, some researchers have stated some desirable traits for homework. These findings are: it disciplines the mind, develops study habits, fosters self-discipline, encourages responsibility, requires time management, and enhances creativity. Schools should help people acquire positive character traits, so homework is one of the basic tools that can instill these character traits.

Basic research has measured the students' achievement concerning teacher feedback on homework. The findings were that on everyone of the achievement tests, the students who had received personal and pertinent feedback about their homework errors, out performed the students who received only their scores as feedback. The students who received the personal comments rated their enjoyment of subject areas much higher than before they started getting the feedback. (Berlinger 1985) The study also showed less anxiety about

subject areas and improved self concepts and attitudes toward school. Teachers even express more positive attitudes toward teaching.

Teachers have felt that what happens in the classroom is the center of the learning process. Homework can enhance the learning process. Increasing the quantity of homework, without following the curriculum guidelines, will produce minimal results. The homework curriculum must be carefully planned so that it is meaningful and learnable. Encouraging parents to take an active interest in their child's education develops good teacher-parent relationships. Even the best teachers need parents' help in fostering children's interest in learning. When a teacher gives homework this strengthens the linkage between families and school. The homework activity promotes a sense of cooperation and a sense of shared commitment between parents and their children's teachers. Teachers use a variety of strategies to teach and reinforce skills. Homework is assigned for a variety of reasons. It can facilitate learning through practice and application. There is individualized learning for both slower and more advanced students. Work that has not been completed at school can be finished at home. Homework can teach independent study skills and work habits in the students. (Salend and Schliff 1988) Preparation homework is given to prepare students to gain maximum benefit from previously taught lessons. This can act as an advance organizer for the teacher's lesson. Homework can be

graded and the grades then used in determining a report card grade. Teachers' homework policies must be consistent. No matter what purpose the teacher chooses, the assignments must be regularly assigned, clearly stated, regularly collected, promptly graded, and promptly returned. The result of this will raise student achievement. (Foyle and Bailey 1986)

By carefully planning homework, teachers can make homework an effective, efficient and enjoyable experience.

Many times parents demand homework. They see homework assignments as opportunities to give their child individualized help that is often missing in crowded classrooms. Homework can give parents insights to a school's philosophy, curriculum and objectives. The parent's role in reinforcing the homework process is a very important task. A daily homework time schedule must be planned. The parent and the child together can determine the time and the length of time spent each day. During daily homework time all other activities must stop. Parents should make themselves available for support and for encouraging good academic results. The academic achievement will let parents know that their support is paying off.

Homework can be a connection between parent, student, and teacher. Parents who are actively involved in their child's homework becomes more aware of the learning process going on in their child's classroom. A valuable contribution that a parent can make to their children's

education is to extend the reach of homework into every day life. If the class is studying the basic four food groups, discuss how these needs are met in your families' meals. If a science unit is being taught about animals, a family outing to the zoo would be interesting. When the child knows that the parent views their work as interesting and important, they see it that way too.

Students develop all kinds of learning skills from homework: observation, communication, cooperation, concentration, and memorization. They will also improve their ability to listen, read, write, discover, and follow directions. (Berlinger 1985) When discussing the homework assignment that was prepared the night before, the student will discover a great deal about other families and their feelings. Homework can both stimulate a child to learn and enhance<sup>o</sup>his/her self esteem. Well handled homework can be a time of sharing for the child and parent. The child can feel confident that the parent is near for assistance.

If a homework program is designed it will help the child develop habits that will serve them well in the classroom and it will convey the message that tackling a mental challenge with parents can be family fun. These activities present a sense of shared commitment between child, parent, and teacher. The child will manage daily routines, build better study habits, increase self discipline, and sharpen their ability to reason and think.

If a child is given the chance to choose from different approaches for completing their homework, this will instill in the child a sense of individuality.

The amount of work time spent on homework results in a student's higher achievement. The student with lower ability can achieve grades that are comparable to those of higher achievers. If the student finds time during school to work on homework assignments, this can give them the feeling of being pleased with themselves for having managed their own time and effort to complete the assignment. Some discipline problems can be avoided by students having an assignment to do rather than being bored. Some students feel the need for pleasing their teacher; homework is a way of achieving this feeling of success. Students' homework papers can be on display, thus motivating the student for the positive completion of other assignments. Homework assignments can allow students to smile or laugh about unusual tasks. It can also challenge the students to think about and defend their opinions. "Little things mean a lot of students." Feedback from homework assignments can enhance their attitude toward a certain subject area and it can overflow into other academic subjects as well.

There are six basic homework lessons to follow:

1. Homework Policy. This policy should define everyone's role in the homework process. State in writing the value you place on homework, why you are assigning homework, the type, the frequency of assigning homework, how you expect homework to be done, and the parental support you expect. It needs to be stated how you will reinforce students for completing homework and the consequences students will face for not completing



assignments. Make sure each student and parent has received a copy of this policy.

2. Homework Drop Spot. Many times students have excuses about forgetting their homework. Brainstorm ideas that might help them remember to bring homework to school everyday. Ask students to share ideas for special "homework drop spots" for finished homework. Each student should choose their own drop spot to place completed homework in each day.
3. Homework Study Area. Students must have a quiet place to do homework effectively. Discuss the best conditions for doing homework and studying. Suggest where they might have a personal study area at home.
4. Homework Survival Kit. Discuss with students what happens at home when they can't find something they need to complete an assignment. Have the students make a list or draw pictures of supplies they need. Show these to parents and gradually get the supplies needed to complete the kit.
5. Daily Homework Time. Discuss some of the problems students have completing homework on time. Most students lead busy lives, so a scheduled time for homework is very important.
6. Providing Motivation. Homework should be made a positive experience for everyone. Constant praise and positive notes are very effective motivators. (Canter 1988)

The research on homework is far from complete, and many questions remain to be asked and studied. Homework should build on classroom work, and should review previously learned materials. Some assignments should build on homework assignments because this reinforces the idea that homework has value. Teachers should grade homework assignments and give feedback to their students. The purpose of homework assignments, the grading policies, and the rules on group work should be made clear to the students. The key to effective homework is recognizing and encouraging the efforts of everyone involved.

## CHAPTER III

## PROCEDURE

To begin researching this study, the writers reviewed literature pertaining to homework versus no homework. After searching the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), the writers decided by title which journal articles to select. From these articles, the writers checked the bibliographies and listed books for a card catalog search.

Through the use of the Info Trac Database a search was run in the area of homework. After this a search was completed on the following topics concerning homework: analysis, case studies, parents, students, and teachers. Resources were primarily checked only as far back as a six year period in order to obtain the latest trend information.

Materials were gathered and reviewed from journals, periodicals and books. Through the use of this review it was decided to conduct a survey of local teachers for information pertaining to homework versus no homework not covered in the research material obtained through libraries. This survey information served as the basis for teacher and parent interviews pertaining to the pros and cons of homework in connection with the effects on academic achievement.

The subjects of this survey were students, teachers, and parents in a public school system. The survey included

students in grades one through three. One elementary building in a county school system was involved. This survey was conducted in a sparsely populated rural community in southwestern Ohio.

Surveys included a cover letter (see Appendix A, page 20) and were distributed to fifteen elementary teachers. Of the elementary teachers surveyed, twelve were female and three were male. There were five teachers at each grade level one through three. The majority of subjects surveyed had between six and twenty years of teaching experience.

The teachers and parents completed a survey on homework versus no homework developed by the writers. (see Appendices C & D, pages 22 & 23).

The homework survey completed by parents was a nine item questionnaire designed to measure how effective homework has been on their child's education.

The homework survey completed by teachers was a seven item questionnaire designed to measure the effects of homework on student achievement.

The writers added an item to the questionnaire concerning parents' and teachers' opinions dealing with homework assignments. The researchers believed that a pattern would develop in the surveys that could be attributed to being selective in assigning homework.

The questionnaire, including a cover letter, was distributed in person, through the in-house mail system and by students, in the elementary school building.

Participants completed the questionnaire individually and independently. Subjects were given one school week to complete and return the survey. Each teacher kept a chart of recorded grades of the students. The controlled and experimental groups' grades were averaged. The findings were examined to determine whether there was any academic achievement differences between the two groups. (see Appendices E, F, & G, pages 24, 25, & 26)

The responses were scored in the following manner using a Summary of Three Homework Studies. (Pendergrass 1985, p. 313) (see Appendix D, page 23)

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

After the surveys were collected from the participating teachers and parents the grade sheets were scored. Of the fifteen elementary teachers surveyed, 83% returned completed questionnaires. Of the eighty-three parents surveyed, 72% returned completed questionnaires.

The teacher surveys (Appendix H, page 27) indicated that 58% do assign homework regularly. All the teachers agreed that students were not assigned too much homework. All teachers believed that assignments are helpful to the students. There were 91% who believed that students could do homework independently. Less than half of the teachers surveyed had no complaints from students about homework assignments. The majority of the teachers indicated that homework is necessary and grades are recorded from homework assignments.

The parent surveys (Appendix I, page 28) indicated that 89% believed that their child had regular homework assignments. Very few parents believed that there was too much homework assigned. Homework assignments were found to be helpful to their children and most students could do their homework independently. Most parents indicated that his/her child received adequate help and a quiet atmosphere in which to do his/her homework. Half of the parents

surveyed indicated that their child does complain about homework, but a higher percent felt that homework was necessary. A small minority felt that homework interfered with extra-curricular activities. The overall feeling of the parents surveyed was that the extra-curricular activities and daily chores could be scheduled in addition to homework.

Scores were compared by averaging reading grades of the students who were assigned homework and those who were not assigned homework. The average score for girls with homework was 87. The average score for boys with homework was 86. The average score for girls without homework was 84. The average score for boys without homework was 80.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem arises yearly--should homework be assigned or not assigned? Research suggests that there is no significant difference found in test scores of students who were assigned homework and those who were not assigned homework. Teachers and parents both agree that homework is essential to education.

Through a basic review of related literature, a survey was constructed and conducted in a rural school setting among teachers and parents with students in grades one through three. The results were shared with teachers to help in their lesson planning.

Through the survey and personal contact afforded by this project with fellow teachers, these writers found most teachers in agreement on the topic of homework.

The project was completed in late May. This time of year may not have afforded a true general picture. This is a time when everyone is anticipating the end of the school year. The students' interests are declining and teachers have many deadlines to be met. A suggestion might be to survey students at different times throughout the school year and see how the results compare.

In conclusion, the surveys and grades seemed to indicate that homework can be useful, but not mandatory. It

is the writers' view that there is no significant difference between the test scores of children who have been exposed to a program of homework versus no homework.



## APPENDIX A

Dear Teachers:

We are doing research in the area of how homework affects academic achievement as part of the requirements for the completion of our Master Degree in Education. I need your cooperation in completing the following survey.

Please reply quickly. We would like to have the surveys completed by April 6, 1990. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kathy L. Waits  
Pamela Grooms  
Eddyth Tolle

## APPENDIX B

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are doing research on how effective homework assignments are for school children.

Please fill out the short questionnaire and return to Mrs. Grooms, Mrs. Tolle, and Mrs. Waits. Your help and opinions will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Mrs. Grooms  
Mrs. Tolle  
Mrs. Waits  
West Union Elementary

APPENDIX C  
PARENT SURVEY

ANSWER YES OR NO BY PLACING A CHECK IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE.

	YES	NO
1. DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS REGULARLY?	_____	_____
2. DO YOU FEEL YOUR CHILD HAS TOO MUCH HOMEWORK ASSIGNED?	_____	_____
3. DO YOU THINK THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE HELPFUL TO YOUR CHILD?	_____	_____
4. IS YOUR CHILD ABLE TO DO THE HOMEWORK ON HIS OR HER OWN?	_____	_____
5. DO YOU HELP YOUR CHILD WITH HIS OR HER HOMEWORK?	_____	_____
6. DO YOU MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD HAS A QUIET PLACE TO DO ASSIGNMENTS?	_____	_____
7. DOES YOUR CHILD COMPLAIN ABOUT DOING HOMEWORK?	_____	_____
8. DO YOU THINK HOMEWORK IS NECESSARY?	_____	_____
9. DOES HOMEWORK INTERFERE WITH YOUR FAMILY'S EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OR DAILY CHORES?	_____	_____

OPTIONAL:

YOU MAY GIVE ANY OPINIONS YOU HAVE DEALING WITH HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS.

APPENDIX D  
TEACHER SURVEY

ANSWER YES OR NO BY PLACING A CHECK IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE.

	YES	NO
1. DO YOUR STUDENTS HAVE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS REGULARLY?	_____	_____
2. DO YOU FEEL YOUR STUDENTS HAVE TOO MUCH HOMEWORK ASSIGNED?	_____	_____
3. DO YOU THINK THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE HELPFUL TO THE STUDENTS?	_____	_____
4. ARE YOUR STUDENTS ABLE TO DO THE HOMEWORK ON THEIR OWN?	_____	_____
5. DO YOUR STUDENTS COMPLAIN ABOUT DOING HOMEWORK?	_____	_____
6. DO YOU THINK HOMEWORK IS NECESSARY?	_____	_____
7. DO YOU RECORD OR GRADE HOMEWORK?	_____	_____

OPTIONAL:

YOU MAY GIVE ANY OPINIONS YOU HAVE DEALING WITH HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS.

APPENDIX E  
SPIRAL SCORES

## Grade One

<u>Student</u>	<u>With Homework</u>	<u>Without Homework</u>	<u>Gain Score</u>
1	97	94	-3
2	87	85	-2
3	88	83	-5
4	98	99	+1
5	86	81	-5
6	71	62	-9
7	58	55	-3
8	93	82	-11
9	96	96	0
10	91	93	+2
11	82	79	-3
12	81	80	-1
13	97	99	+2
14	98	96	-2
15	98	95	-3
16	84	80	-4
17	78	73	-5
18	78	62	-16
19	77	70	-7
20	91	92	+1
21	86	83	-3
22	76	40	-36
23	77	62	-15
24	93	96	+3
25	75	73	-2
26	74	73	-1
27	66	55	-11
28	79	82	+3

APPENDIX F  
SPIRAL SCORES

## Grade Two

<u>Student</u>	<u>With Homework</u>	<u>Without Homework</u>	<u>Gain Score</u>
1	92	96	+4
2	94	98	+4
3	93	97	+4
4	94	73	-21
5	93	83	-10
6	41	50	+9
7	91	88	-3
8	85	73	-12
9	91	82	-9
10	95	92	-3
11	90	85	-5
12	90	77	-13
13	78	77	-1
14	91	92	+1
15	86	86	0
16	93	91	-2
17	93	91	-2
18	87	85	-2
19	97	86	-11
20	96	84	-12
21	93	90	-3
22	87	88	+1
23	97	73	-24
24	82	85	+3
25	92	95	+3

APPENDIX G  
SPIRAL SCORES

## Grade Three

<u>Student</u>	<u>With Homework</u>	<u>Without Homework</u>	<u>Gain Score</u>
1	85	83	-2
2	74	71	-3
3	100	100	0
4	93	91	-2
5	73	75	+2
6	79	75	-4
7	73	75	+2
8	93	85	-8
9	93	100	+7
10	100	100	0
11	89	87	-2
12	100	100	0
13	93	90	-3
14	94	97	+3
15	80	95	+15
16	67	75	+8
17	84	81	-3
18	74	75	+1
19	87	82	-5
20	100	100	0
21	93	85	-8
22	100	95	-5
23	89	88	-1
24	85	97	+12
25	100	92	-8
26	80	82	+2
27	80	75	-5
28	100	100	0
29	75	65	-10
30	90	82	-8

APPENDIX H  
TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Question 1	58%	41%
Question 2	0%	100%
Question 3	100%	0%
Question 4	91%	8%
Question 5	33%	66%
Question 6	91%	8%
Question 7	91%	8%



## APPENDIX I

## PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Question 1	89%	11%
Question 2	78%	93%
Question 3	97%	31%
Question 4	64%	36%
Question 5	92%	8%
Question 6	94%	6%
Question 7	53%	47%
Question 8	92%	8%
Question 9	20%	80%

APPENDIX J

SUMMARY OF THREE HOMEWORK STUDIES

No.	Level/Subject	Length	Design	Measure	Results		
					Con.	Exp.	
28	1st Reading	8 Weeks	Control vs. Experimental	G.P.A.	Girls	86%	83%
					Boys	82%	76%
25	2nd Reading	8 Weeks	Control vs. Experimental	G.P.A.	Girls	89%	82%
					Boys	83%	86%
30	3rd Reading	8 Weeks	Control vs. Experimental	G.P.A.	Girls	88%	87%
					Boys	86%	81%

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