

Aitken College

HOMework POLICY

Author	Date	Revised	Copies to...
SAC and Committee	2014	2014	All staff Parents

What does Educational Research tell us about Homework?

The paragraphs below summarise some of the key ideas raised by Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering in *The Case For and Against Homework* (March 2007). In this article they argue that:

'Teachers should not abandon homework. Instead, they should improve its instructional quality.'

In two important studies, Cooper and his colleagues reviewed research dating as far back as the 1930s; their 2006 study reviewed research from 1987 to 2003. Commenting on studies that attempted to examine the causal relationship between homework and academic achievement, they noted:

With only rare exceptions, the relationship between the amount of homework students do and their achievement outcomes was found to be positive and statistically significant. Therefore, we think it would not be imprudent, based on the evidence in hand, to conclude that doing homework causes improved academic achievement.

Many teachers and parents feel that homework overvalues work to the detriment of personal and family well-being.

Bennett and Kalish (2006) criticized both the quantity and quality of homework in (American) schools. They provided evidence that too much homework harms students' health and family time, and they asserted that teachers are not well trained in how to assign homework. The authors suggested that individuals and parent groups should insist that teachers reduce the amount of homework, design more valuable assignments, and avoid homework altogether over breaks and holidays.

In *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* (2006), Kohn concluded that research fails to demonstrate homework's effectiveness as an instructional tool and recommended changing the "default state" from an expectation that homework will be assigned to an expectation that homework will not be assigned. According to Kohn, teachers should only assign homework when they can justify that the assignments are "beneficial", ideally involving students in activities appropriate for the home, such as performing an experiment in the kitchen, cooking, doing crossword puzzles with the family, word or number games, watching good TV shows, or reading.

Michael Grose, in *Teach Your Kids to Shrug* advises parents to provide a balance of activities and plenty of 'downtime', so that children are able to make good decisions about how to spend their leisure time.

It makes good sense to only assign homework that is beneficial to student learning instead of assigning homework as a matter of policy. Many of those who conduct research on homework explicitly or implicitly recommend this practice. However, this needs to be balanced with the higher workload and greater pressure of time in the senior years, and the need to develop good study habits.

The Aitken College guidelines prescribe only a maximum amount of time for homework at each level and should be used flexibly. Homework is unlikely to be effective if the student cannot see a clear purpose for the work and how it might help them achieve a particular learning outcome.

Research-Based Homework Guidelines for Teachers

Research provides strong evidence that, when used appropriately, homework benefits student achievement. To make sure that homework is appropriate, teachers should follow these guidelines:

- Assign purposeful homework. Legitimate purposes for homework include introducing new content, practising a skill or process that students can do independently but not fluently, elaborating on information that has been addressed in class to deepen students' knowledge, and providing opportunities for students to explore topics of their own interest.
- Design homework to maximize the chances that students will complete it. For example, ensure that homework is at the appropriate level of difficulty. Students should be able to complete homework assignments independently with relatively high success rates, but they should still find the assignments challenging enough to be interesting. A clear statement of the expected learning outcome or intention would be helpful.
- Involve parents in appropriate ways (for example, as a sounding board to help students summarize what they learned from the homework) without requiring parents to act as teachers or to police students' homework completion. Extended project work or model construction may place an unreasonable burden on students and parents.
- Monitor completion and provide regular feedback on homework tasks
- Carefully monitor the amount of homework assigned so that it is appropriate to students' age levels and does not take too much time away from other home activities.

Research-Based Homework Guidelines for Parents

Parents are most likely to develop a productive homework environment when they:

- Ask questions that help students clarify and summarize what they have learned.
- Ask students to show or explain their work and become engaged in conversations that relate to the academic curriculum and thus extend the students' learning. Because these are likely to be genuine conversations rather than more formal tasks, both parents and children are likely to experience them as enjoyable rather than threatening.
- Set reasonable expectations in terms of the time spent on homework.
- Involve students in setting their own homework schedule.
- Provide some 'downtime' every week.
- Provide students with a pleasant place to work, free from distractions.

Year Levels	Recommended Time (approximate only)	Comments for Teachers and Parents
Prep - Year 2	Not more than 1 hour each week. No limit on reading time.	Research clearly indicates that homework has smaller effects at lower grade levels. For students in the earliest grades, it should foster positive attitudes, habits, and character traits, permit appropriate parent involvement and reinforce learning of simple skills introduced in class. No holiday homework.
Years 3 and 4	Not more than 1.5 hours each week. No limit on reading time.	Activities that reinforce basic numeracy e.g. multiplication tables practice, games like Monopoly and Scrabble, and other similar activities will be useful at these levels. No holiday homework.
Year 5	Not more than 3 hours each week. No limit on reading time.	Activities that reinforce basic numeracy e.g. multiplication tables practice, games like Monopoly and Scrabble, and other similar activities will be useful at this level. No holiday homework.
Years 6 & 7	Not more than 4 hours per week. No limit on reading time.	Minimum of 1.5 hours reading each week. Try to provide reading material that taps into a 'passion' or area of interest. No holiday homework.
Years 8 & 9	Not more than 7 hours per week	Students will be expected to develop their study skills and move towards independent learning. No holiday homework.
Year 10	On average, around 1.5 hours each night.	Some weekend homework may now be required and students will continue to develop the ability to study and revise independently. Training in organisational and study skills provided at the College by Elevate Education.
Years 11 - 12	On average, about 3 hours per night	Training in goal-setting, organisation and study skills provided by Elevate Education.

The electronic diary (App4) is the key to good organisation and completion of set homework in the secondary school. Students must record homework tasks as they are set. Teachers will set aside time during the lesson for homework to be recorded in the diary.

Homeroom and subject teachers will often make notes in the diary regarding homework.