

# Homework Teaching Strategies

Ashley Pagel

**Abstract:** To ensure the best for students, teachers have been trying to figure out the most creative ways to present material so that their students will be able to learn what is asked of them in the most effective way. While different practices are recommended like the use of electronics, field trips, hands on learning, and many more; this paper describes why the best practice of all is homework. The reasons behind this are because of the homework's intended purpose and positive effects that occur because of it.

**Keywords:** *homework, purpose, positives*

While teaching, instructors have used many practices to help their students in learning their core subjects such as math, science, history, and English. Some current in-class tactics include the use of electronics, hands-on learning, student participation, active participation, oral reading, and many more. Although all of these strategies are very common and useful, one practice has the most positive outcomes that are academically, short-term, long-term, and non-academically relevant to the students. Being used for many decades, homework has taken on different meanings and connotations towards students.

Originally, homework was used to discipline students' minds, then the attitudes towards homework started to change or shift into a different direction. Around the mid-1960's homework was seen by the teachers and parents as too much pressure to put onto student's minds. Moving on to the mid-80's, many studies were done and conducted to figure out the usefulness of homework and it was then seen as a positive influence for students (Cooper, H., 2006). With numerous studies being done to figure out the benefits of homework, many different factors affect the outcome. For example; what is the purpose of homework and how much homework is the right amount to be given to different grade levels?

Everything has a place and purpose. Teachers do not give tests or quizzes to students because they want to see them suffer and struggle. This

same principle applies to homework. A teacher does not thrive on the power given to them by seeing their students struggling to accomplish their homework. Homework should be a positive experience for students. Disciplining children by giving them homework is not the way of teaching a student the different subjects they are supposed to learn in school. The true purpose of homework should be to help the student practice, participate, help in personal development, increase the parent-child relationship, and public relations (Epstein, J.L., 1988). While students practicing homework to become better in a specific subject is a clear idea, some of the other reasons that homework helps a child are a bit unclear.

Participation from a child can be hard to draw out. Sometimes it depends on the student. It can differ from if the student is naturally shy, does not know the material, or they may feel that their answer is wrong and they will be looked down upon or laughed at by their fellow peers. Every class also has the students that "carry the others" in the class and that can be quite intimidating to other students. These students are the ones to answer every question asked by the teacher and there are only a handful of these kids in every classroom. With these kids, they sometimes steal the spotlight, the teacher's attention, and could make the other students feel like they shouldn't be answering the questions by making them feel inadequate. By giving homework through the form of worksheets or readings that have questions included that students are required to answer, participation by other students who don't usually answer questions should increase gradually.

Students start to gain confidence in their work because they start to come out of their shell and realize that it is ok to have a wrong answer. Wrong answers said by students are actually positive in nature as well. Although right answers are strongly encouraged, wrong answers can help teachers realize what a student needs help on. Homework also requires students to practice what they learned and in return, when a teacher asks questions about the homework they just

completed, that child can feel confident that they can give a decent answer when called upon. Eventually there will be no students “carrying the class”, but the whole group working together to answer and solve problems or questions asked by the teacher. Homework also helps is with the parent-child relationship. While homework sometimes can be completed during class, some or most of it has to be taken home. At home, children start to forget what they did in class and because the teacher can’t help their students when the student is at home, the job falls upon the parents to help them. With the help of the parents, children can start to bond and form a closer relationship with them while doing their homework.

Homework is a positive influence, starting with the purpose of it and ending with how much it really affects the student. While we know some of the more obvious ways that homework is able to impact a student positively, some studies have to be done to figure out the deeper effectiveness that homework can have on students.

While many people have done studies on the effects of homework, one man’s studies have paved the way for others, Harris Cooper. In his studies, Cooper used different situations to figure out if homework was a positive influence. He deduced that homework had multiple positive effects academically and non-academically. Cooper also not only saw a short-term positive effect, but a long-term effect as well. The immediate achievement and learning paved the way for students to gain better retention skills of factual knowledge, an increased understanding of the subjects, greater critical thinking, the processing of information, and a keener concept formation. The long-term positive effects Cooper found that homework had on students, were a willingness to learn during the time that they had away from school, an improved attitude towards school, and better study habits and skills. Gaining this knowledge, Cooper also saw a positive effect in terms of non-academics towards students. A student who did homework had a greater self-direction and self-discipline, better time organization, and more independent time solving (Cooper, H., 1989).

Homework is also positive in the dealings of the school. Homework is cost effective, links the school and family, and contains different purposes with each grade that help the school determine if the students are achieving the knowledge that they need to know before they continue onto the next grade (Cooper, H.,1994). With all the positive effects coming from the studies Harris Cooper has done, another question arises. How much homework is too much for it to start becoming a negative effect on students and their learning?

Homework has a different effect on each grade level and how old a student is. Younger students should have homework that creates a positive attitude, instills good habits, and great character traits; whereas, older students should have homework that helps them learn the material and the specific topics that the teacher has taught them.

Older students should be able to take the harder homework that they had on what they learned in class and be able to apply it to different situations. Through Cooper’s studies, he has determined that from grades one to three, students should have one to three assignments a week that last 15 minutes or less. Grades four to six should have two to four assignments a week that last 15-45 minutes a week. From grades seven to nine, homework should last 45-75 minutes a week with only three to five assignments and grades 10-12 should have four to five assignments lasting 75-120 minutes long (Cooper, H., 1994). Concluding on his studies, each grade level has shown that these designated amounts of mandatory homework and times are optimal for each grade. This shows that the amount of homework being presented should help these students gain the short-term, long-term, academic, and non-academic positive effects. Any more than recommended and students may become resentful towards the homework and a negative effect will start to occur.

Teachers have had different activities to help their students retain the information that they have been conducting in their classrooms. While some tactics may not have as many positive effects, other types of strategies do. From electronics to student activities, each one has

many outcomes that positively and negatively affect the students. Although one very old practice is still the best of them all. It may seem like a chore to students, but there is a reason why homework is called what it is. To learn the material in the most optimal way, students should have to take their tasks home and work on it. That homework that students take home could include a paper that the teacher assigns, a project/PowerPoint on a specific topic, worksheets, readings and problems from the book, and many more. Homework is the best teaching strategy because it ensures that the students can retain the information that they practice and it helps them gain the positive qualities that are associated with it.

### References

- Cooper, H., Robinson, J. C., & Patall, E. A. (2006). Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(1), 1-62.
- Cooper, H. (1994). Homework Research and Policy: A Review of the Literature. *Research/Practice*, 2(2).
- Cooper, H. (1989). Synthesis of Research on Homework. *Educational Leadership*, 47(3), 85-91.
- Epstein, J. L. (1988). Homework Practices, Achievements, and Behaviors of Elementary School Students. Report No. 26.