

Homework eBook Excerpt

Homework Overview

In 2004, Janine Bempechat reviewed the literature regarding homework and found “homework assignments provide children with the time and experience they need to develop beliefs about achievement and study habits that are helpful for learning, including the value of effort and the ability to cope with mistakes and difficulty. Skills such as these develop neither overnight, nor in a vacuum. Rather, they are fostered over years through daily interactions with parents and teachers, whose own beliefs and attitudes about learning and education have a profound influence on children's developing beliefs about their intellectual abilities (Sigel McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992).” She also cited research that found, “If our goal is to prepare children for the demands of secondary schooling and beyond we need to pay as much attention to the development of skills that help children take initiative in their learning and maintain or regain their motivation when it wanes.” She also found that research indicated that “homework provides children with time and experience to develop positive beliefs about achievement, as well as strategies for coping with mistakes, difficulties, and setbacks.” In March of 2007, educator Da Costa stated, “The value and importance of giving homework as a tool to educate a student is an important practice. Just like there are various benefits to practicing in regard to sports or music, when we practice math or when we practice language, it is to our advantage.”

An after-school program provides the perfect opportunity for children to work on their homework as it provides monitored practice time for the students each day. During this scheduled homework time, students may work cooperatively with peers as well as receive assistance and support from a program leader who can help students stay focused on their assignments, ask probing questions that will guide the student to solving his/her homework dilemmas, and check over completed work.

Homework helps children:

- practice skills learned in school
- follow directions
- learn to start and complete work on time
- learn to become responsible.

There are several kinds of homework:

- Reading books, handouts, other materials, and even newspapers
- Writing reports
- Practicing spelling lists and completing spelling contracts
- Solving math problems
- Working on science, social studies and other projects
- Finishing classroom work that was not completed

There are usually School Board Policies regarding homework. A sample policy follows:

Grades K-1: 10-15 minutes, 2 nights per week

Grades 3-4: 20-30 minutes, 3 nights per week

Grades 5-6: 20-30 minutes, 4 nights per week

Grades 7-8: 45-60 minutes, 4 nights per week

All grades, read 30 minutes each night

Everyone is interested in homework being completed:

- Youth so the task is complete and they can raise a hand during class the next day;
- Teachers so youth have opportunities to practice the lessons they've been working on;
- Parents so that the evening can be spent enjoying the family;
- Program staff for the feeling of satisfaction in a job well done.

Even though after-school is not a homework completion program, completing homework is often a priority. It is important to make that very clear to parents and the instructional day staff from the very beginning. The role of the after-school program is to provide monitored practice time and space, including the supplies and materials that youth will need to complete the homework assignment. To ensure that students are effectively monitored and supported, staff development is essential. Building both the competency and capacity of after-school staff to support young people during homework time is critical.