

# The Homework Debate: How Homework Benefits Students

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## Four ways homework aids students' academic achievement

Homework provides an opportunity for parents to interact with and understand the content their students are learning so they can provide another means of academic support for students. Memphis Parent writer Glenda Faye Pryor-Johnson says that, "When your child does homework, you do homework," and notes that this is an opportunity for parents to model good behavior for their children.

Pryor-Johnson also identifies four qualities children develop when they complete homework that can help them become high-achieving students:

1. Responsibility
2. Time management
3. Perseverance
4. Self-esteem

While these cannot be measured on standardized tests, perseverance has garnered a lot of attention as an essential skill for successful students. Regular accomplishments like finishing homework build self-esteem, which aids students' mental and physical health. Responsibility and time management are highly desirable qualities that benefit students long after they graduate.

## NYU and Duke professors refute the idea that homework is unrelated to student success

In response to the National School Board Association's Center for Public Education's findings that homework was not conclusively related to student success, historian and NYU professor Diane Ravitch contends that the study's true discovery was that students who did not complete homework or who lacked the resources to do so suffered poor outcomes.

Ravitch believes the study's data only supports the idea that those who complete homework benefit from homework. She also cites additional benefits of homework: when else would students be allowed to engage thoughtfully with a text or write a complete essay? Constraints on class time require that such activities are given as outside assignments.

## **5 studies support a significant relationship between homework completion and academic success**

Duke University professor Harris Cooper supports Ravitch's assessment, saying that, "Across five studies, the average student who did homework had a higher unit test score than the students not doing homework." Dr. Cooper and his colleagues analyzed dozens of studies on whether homework is beneficial in a 2006 publication, "Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987–2003."

This analysis found 12 less-authoritative studies that link achievement to time spent on homework, but control for many other factors that could influence the outcome. Finally, the research team identified 35 studies that found a positive correlation between homework and achievement, but only after elementary school. Dr. Cooper concluded that younger students might be less capable of benefiting from homework due to undeveloped study habits or other factors.

## **Recommended amount of homework varies by grade level**

"Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement?" also identifies the amount homework that serves as a learning tool for students. While practice improves test scores at all grade levels, "Homework for junior high students appears to reach the point of diminishing returns after about 90 minutes a night. For high school students, the positive line continues to climb until between 90 minutes and 2.5 hours of homework a night, after which returns diminish."

Dr. Cooper's conclusion — homework is important, but discretion can and should be used when assigning it — addresses the valid concerns of homework critics. While the act of completing homework has benefits in terms of developing good habits in students, homework must prove useful for students so that they buy in to the process and complete their assignments. If students (or their parents) feel homework is a useless component of their learning, they will skip it — and miss out on the major benefits, content and otherwise, that homework has to offer.

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*Monica Fuglei is a graduate of the University of Nebraska in Omaha and a current adjunct faculty member of Arapahoe Community College in Colorado, where she teaches composition and creative writing.*