

The Case Against Homework: A Fact Sheet

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- According to a 2001 review of more than 120 studies of homework and its effects by Professor Harris Cooper of Duke University, the country's leading homework researcher, and his updated 2006 review of an additional sixty studies, there is very little correlation between the amount of homework and achievement in elementary school and only a moderate correlation in middle school. Even in high school, "too much homework may diminish its effectiveness or even become counterproductive," writes Cooper in his latest research review [Harris Cooper, *The Battle Over Homework*, second edition, page 26, and *Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of the Research 1987–2003, the Review of Educational Research* (Spring 2006)].
- Many countries with the highest scoring students on achievement tests, such as Japan, Denmark, and the Czech Republic, have teachers who assign little homework. Meanwhile, countries such as Greece, Thailand, and Iran, where students have some of the worst average scores, have teachers who assign a lot of homework. American students do as much homework as their peers in other countries—if not more—but still manage only to score around the international average. [*National Differences, Global Similarities: World Culture and the Future of Schooling* by David P. Baker and Gerald K. LeTendre, Stanford University Press, 2005]
- Most teachers do not take courses specifically on homework during teacher training. In fact, research shows that the great majority are unaware of the research on the problems with homework [Stephen Aloia, "Teacher Assessment of Homework," *Academic Exchange Quarterly* (Fall 2003)]. That's why, as Cooper told the authors of *The Case Against Homework*, when it comes to homework, "most teachers are winging it."

RECOMMENDED HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

- According to Professor Cooper, kids should be assigned no more than ten minutes per grade level per school night (Monday through Thursday only). In other words, this adds up to ten minutes in first grade, twenty minutes in second grade, and so on, up to a maximum of two hours per night in high school [Harris Cooper, *The Battle Over Homework*, second edition, page 26].
- The National Education Association and National Parent Teacher Association recommend no more than ten to twenty minutes of homework per night in grades K–2, and thirty to sixty minutes per night in grades 3–6.

- And some education experts, such as Etta Kralovec, associate professor of teacher education University of Arizona South, and coauthor of *The End of Homework: How Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning*, recommend none.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Kids between the ages of five and twelve need ten to eleven hours of sleep each night; teens need 9.25 hours. According to the National Sleep Foundation's 2004 Sleep in America Poll, 54 percent of first- through fifth-graders sleep just 9 to ten hours each night and 17 percent sleep less than nine hours. According to the Foundation's 2006 poll, 80 percent of teens don't get the recommended amount of sleep. At least 28 percent fall asleep in school and 22 percent fall asleep doing homework. [All facts: National Sleep Foundation, www.sleepfoundation.org]
- According to a large study by the University of Michigan, family meals are the *single strongest predictor* of better achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems for children ages three to twelve [*Journal of Marriage and the Family*, May 2001].
- According to the American Psychological Association, typical schoolchildren today report more anxiety than did child psychiatric patients in the 1950s [*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, December 2000].
- Kids are more sedentary than ever before, and homework is a contributing factor. Since 1981, the amount of time kids spend playing sports has decreased by 58 percent for six- to eight-year-olds, 19 percent for nine- to eleven-year-olds, 43 percent for twelve- to fourteen-year-olds, and 28 percent for fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds [*Changing Times of American Youth: 1981–2003*, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 2004]. Since 1980, the number of overweight children in the U.S. has tripled, according to a 2004 report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) of the Department of Health and Human Services. Even since 2000, there's been a significant increase: 17.1 percent of American kids between the ages of two and nineteen are now considered overweight [*Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 2004]. The number of children with diabetes has also increased dramatically, according to the American Diabetes Association. The CDC predicts that one in three children born in 2000 will become diabetic [*Journal of the American Medical Association*, October 2003].

From *The Case Against Homework: How Homework Is Hurting Our Children and What We Can Do About It*, Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006).