

RESEARCH BRIEF: Challenge Success Review of Research on Homework

What does the research say about homework?

Challenge Success at Stanford University offers families and schools practical, research-based tools to raise healthy, motivated kids. A number of San Francisco schools work with Challenge Success to address issues of student engagement and stress within their student bodies. In general, many of the schools Challenge Success works with want to know more about the research on homework. In a recent white paper titled “Changing the Conversation about Homework from Quantity and Achievement to Quality and Engagement,” researchers with Challenge Success share their findings from an extensive review of research about homework. They share the research they found through the lens of four arguments:

- **Argument #1 - Students should do homework because it’s good for them.** Challenge Success found no research supporting the notion that homework is essential for a rigorous curriculum, strong teaching, or an effective way to develop students’ work ethic.
- **Argument #2 - Kids spend less time on homework than they used to and in comparison to kids in other countries.** Challenge Success found that the research on time spent on homework is ambiguous, and depends on the students studied and the method for tracking them.
- **Argument #3 - Homework leads to high student grades and test scores.** Again, the research on the relationship between homework with grades/test scores is mixed with one study showing a mild correlation for middle and high school students, but finding no relationship for elementary students.ⁱ
- **Argument #4 - Doing too much homework leads to burn out and disengagement from school.** The research on homework’s relationship with burn out/disengagement is not conclusive. Challenge Success’s work with schools finds that too much homework relates to some problems with health and engagement in learning.ⁱⁱ

What advice does Challenge Success give teachers?	What advice does Challenge Success give parents?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make homework developmentally appropriate, differentiated, and able to be done independently. Have students start homework in class to assess whether it is doable, appropriate. 2. Help students understand the purpose and value of the homework. Teachers should take time to explain how homework assignments connect back to the big ideas of a given unit. 3. Use homework specifically for tasks that cannot be performed in class. 4. Predict the amount of time homework may take. Teachers might consider tracking homework time by having students do homework in class, keeping homework diaries, or having a time limit for assignments. 5. Determine whether homework should count towards student grade and, if so, to what extent. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents should act as cheerleaders and supporters, not homework police. Instead of checking homework, parents can show an active interest in the content of homework. 2. When scheduling after school activities, keep in mind you child’s homework load. Work with your child to determine a healthy schedule of activities that allow time for homework, sleep and play. 3. Recognize that children learn in different ways and have different work styles. Discuss with your child the working conditions for doing homework. 4. Advocate for healthier homework policies at your school. 5. Let children make mistakes and experience “successful failures.” Recognize that one missed or poorly done homework assignment is not going to hurt your child in the long run.

ⁱ Cooper, H. (2007) *The battle over homework: Common ground for administrators, teachers, and parents*. Thousand Oaks, A: Corwin Press.

ⁱⁱ Galloway, M.K. & Pope, D. (2007) Hazardous homework? The relationship between homework, goal orientation, and well-being in adolescence. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 20(4), 25-31.