

5-2020

## Too Much Homework

Diana Aguirre  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all)

---

### Recommended Citation

Aguirre, Diana, "Too Much Homework" (2020). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 864.  
[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/864](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/864)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

**Too Much Homework: How does homework help from Kindergarten to 2nd grade?**

---

Diana Aguirre  
Liberal Studies Department  
College of Education and California State University of Monterey Bay

---

## Abstract

This capstone examines the correct amount of homework to give Kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade students. The primary concern was finding the ideal amount of homework to have the best benefits to students without any harmful effects on students. Some research indicated that students' grade levels should determine the amount of homework given to students. Some studies explained the negative consequences to family and students when too much homework is required. However, other research proposed that the quality of homework mattered; that busy work was inappropriate to give students. We also examined some of the educational practices of different countries.

## Introduction

Five year old to 7 year old children go home with a packet of homework every week after school where they have about 4 hours to complete about 15-30 minutes worth of homework. This is accounting for the possibility that one of the parents is available to pick them up from school and be with them from 4pm until getting ready for bed at around 8pm to get the recommended amount of sleep. 4 hours to unwind from school, have a snack, get some exercise or do an extracurricular activity, travel home, join parents for any errands they may need to run, spend time with family, friends and siblings, practice a hobby, clean up their rooms/areas, take a shower, get dressed, do their chores, and get ready for bed. In between these responsibilities and also needs for developing children they are given more responsibilities which they do want to complete. In my capstone I

wanted to see what the balance was between positives and negatives effects between children from Kindergarten to Second grade and on parents as well. I set out to use research as a guide, and planned on using interviews with parents, teachers, students, school district administrators on the subject as well until the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak shut this possibility down.

## **Literature Review**

### **Countries with the highest testing scores and their methods, their views on homework**

One of the countries most well known for their high education benchmarks is Finland. The country spends less time in the classroom but has been ranked very highly in the Programme for International Student assessment by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In this test 15 year olds are measured on their reading, math and science skills in meeting real world challenges.

According to the Center on international education benchmarking there are many factors that have led to Finland's success in recent years. One being that in the earliest years of schooling students spend multiple years with the same teacher. This allows teachers to keep an eye on the development of the students and be more aware of their learning styles and build a family-type of classroom environment. Looking at the results of the testing results across the world it is hard to argue that this methodology is not effective.

---

**Results show little connection between the amount of homework completed and the test scores. Even if they do show some amounts of higher scores there are arguments that they cannot be proven to be connected.**

During my studies one research paper was mentioned in multiple sources. This study was conducted by Duke University Psychology Professor Harris Cooper. Cooper (2006) found that there was a positive correlation between the amount of time spent on homework and achievement. A positive correlation is described as a relationship between two variables in which both variables move in tandem, or the same direction; In our case: time spent doing homework and student achievement. Cooper (2006) and his research team took a deep dive into research done across the years and looked at the relationships done in these tests to find the effects of homework and student achievement. In their findings it becomes apparent that this positive correlation is much greater in higher grade levels such as 9 through 12 than the younger elementary grades. He also went on to note some of the positive outcomes that were found from homework that included but were not limited to: building study habits, attitudes toward school, self-discipline, curiosity, and problem solving skills. Cooper (2006) does go on to state how his research had its limitations.

However, the studies using naturally occurring measures of time on homework found strong evidence of a link to longer-term achievement measures. We suspect that this distinction in the types of measures used in experimental and naturalistic studies of homework will persist. This is because the large-scale manipulation of homework across multiple subject areas and long durations within the same samples of students—the type of experiment likely needed to produce homework effects on grades and standardized tests—will require considerable resources and the cooperation of educators and parents willing to participate. (Cooper 2006)

He concluded by recommending that more research be done in five different variations.

- 
1. Students in multiple grades especially the early elementary ages
  2. Students with other varying characteristics
  3. Variations in the subject matter of homework assignments, including subjects other than reading and math
  4. Measures of the non-achievement related effects of homework
  5. Variations in the amount of homework assigned, so that optimum amounts of homework can be examined

As indicated in the first of the recommendations, Cooper acknowledges that there is not enough information to recommend large amounts of homework for the early elementary ages.

The counter points of his argument are brought up by Cathy Vatterott an education professor from the University of Missouri- St. Louis in an interview with Katie Reilly from Time Magazine (2016). She argues that Correlation does not equal causation. She asks "Does homework cause achievement, or do high achievers do more homework?"

She supports students not starting homework until fourth or fifth grade as she does not see sufficient proof that homework is helpful for students in elementary school.

### **Arguments for and against the amount of time spent on homework. 1-2 pages**

In Cooper and Vatterotts papers they both acknowledge a cycle of arguments towards not enough homework being assigned and too much. Thus comes forward the argument of how much time is enough? Votterott found that in the early 1930 anti homework sentiment that there was a Society for the Abolition of homework. School districts across the United States voted to abolish homework, especially in the lower grades. In 1957 after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik I* the attitudes toward homework, the United States wanted to

compete with Russia, they felt that our students were no longer prepared to compete in a future technology race. There was now a new argument against homework.

The homework problem was reconceived as part of a national crisis: the U.S. was losing the Cold War because Russian children were smarter; that is, they were working harder and achieving more in school . . . The new discourse pronounced too little homework an indicator of the dismal state of American schooling. A commitment to heavy homework loads was alleged to reveal seriousness of purpose in education; homework became an instrument of national defense policy. (Gill & Schlossman, 2004)

Over the next years there was a change in how much homework students were receiving and the young ones were no exception. Hofferth & Sandberg's study *Changes in American children's time* (2000) found that between 1981 and 1997 the youngest students 6 to 8, started doing more homework 52 minutes weekly to 128 minutes.

Vatterott shows many more instances of the United States swinging back and forth in the argument for finding the right amount of homework. But states that two prominent educational organizations have gone on record about their stances toward homework. The American Education Research association stated

Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time that should be devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents.  
(Vatterott)

In 1966 The National Education Association stated

It is generally recommended (a) that children in the early elementary school have no homework specifically assigned by the teacher; (b) that limited amounts of homework— not more than an hour a day— be introduced

during the upper elementary school and junior high years; (c) that homework be limited to four nights a week; and (d) that in secondary school no more than one and a half hours a night be expected. (Vatterott)

Both of these statements support limiting the amounts of homework or even not doing it all in the early ages to provide children with meeting their basic needs, more than creating stress on little minds.

In relation to modern times The National PTA and National Education both support the “10-minute rule” a maximum of 10 minutes per grade level, 120 minutes for twelfth graders and 20 minutes for second graders.

Cooper defended his stance in his interview within the **Time** Article *Is Homework Good for Kids? Here's What the Research Says*. He agrees in the complaints being cyclical citing the 1970 argument for being globally competitive. But he argues against having no homework at all, but he does not believe that Second-graders should not do two hours a night but he also thinks they should have a small amount. He believes that homework is similar to medication and dietary supplements. He said “If you take too little, they'll have no effect. If you take too much, they can kill you. If you take the right amount you'll get better.

Votterot finishes by stating that she thinks there should be more emphasis on improving the quality of homework tasks, and she supports efforts to eliminate homework for



younger kids. "I have no concerns about students not starting homework until fourth grade or fifth grade,"

### **Effects of stress on students 1-2 pages**

Our bodies are very protective of themselves. One of the things our bodies have done to help protect us is becoming aware of outside stressors and gives us a way to escape or fight those stressors. Unfortunately our bodies aren't the best at identifying physical stress and mental stress. When we have stressors like: homework that is due or our brains switch from a relaxed state into a flight or fight stage. Our body uses cortisone and adrenaline in our blood stream which serve as physical and mental performance enhancers to aid us get away from whatever problem we are facing. This is great for athletes and for getting away from a tiger or hunting a deer but not so much for young children just beginning their schooling career. Even in adults being in these states for too long is damaging to their health.

The most affected organ in this state is the heart, blood pressure and rate both rise to get blood into muscles to assist the body in its state, which as mentioned before serves us well in many purposes, but not great for young children who are not yet ready to handle this. Oftentimes this results in children who will run away from homework, bite their erasers,

---

wiggle in their chairs or become very frustrated. These are very natural reactions to this state of being. This happens because the students know they have to finish the homework but don't necessarily have the methods to deal with the stress or the knowledge on how to accomplish the assignment. If they cannot face the assignment they would rather fly from it. Unfortunately many parents don't know how to help their children deal with this situation. We are untrained and unprepared for it. Which could possibly be why there are so many cases of incorrectly diagnosed adhd children.

Vatterott touches on this subject in *The Cult(ure) of Homework*

As pediatrics grew as a medical specialty, more doctors began to speak out about the effect of homework on the health and wellbeing of children. The benefits of fresh air, sunshine, and exercise for children were widely accepted, and homework had the potential to interfere. One hundred years ago, rather than diagnosing children with attention deficit disorder, pediatricians simply prescribed more outdoor exercise. Homework was blamed for nervous conditions in children, eyestrain, stress, lack of sleep, and other conditions. Homework was viewed as a culprit that robbed children of important opportunities for social interaction. (Vatterott, 2009)

Spending time outside and playing sports with others is greatly limited by homework and does not allow children to reset their minds and bodies from the rigors and stressors from school and daily lives.

Some may argue that it is unrealistic to state that young children are stressed as they do not have real responsibilities or tasks but to them it does feel like real stress. In

*Homework, Stress, and Mood Disturbance in Senior High School Students* by Nadya

Kouzma and Gerard Kennedy, an article in *Psychological Reports*, they found that many students consider homework the chief source of stress in their lives. Their study

investigated the relationship between hours spent on homework, stress and mood disturbance in senior high school students. Now, these may not be in the age group that I was looking at. It was difficult to find more studies in the age range that I was hoping to examine.

Furthermore another study by Judy Ann Hale HealingArt: Young Children Coping With Stress a Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Alabama Association of Young Children. Hale found that

Some of the indicators that homework causes stress in young children are behavioral changes. (Such as; Mood swings, changes in sleep patterns and possible constipation. That being said, There are also physical changes that may occur. such as; sighing, ready tears, fingernail biting and trouble completing school work.

Though it is proven that The arts can act as a healing force. This includes story telling, music, dance, and visual arts. This allows the children to feel safe in an environment. (Hale)

Without these forms of expression students suffer from more of these behavioral changes.

Over the past decade School districts have cut much of the funding for these

Programs.

### **Parent involvement in assignments**

A study I found looked at parent involvement with 5th and 8th graders. It found that quality of help was much more important/ effective than the quantity of involvement. The main goal for the parents was to help create independence for the student. This study found that some assignments required a lot of parent supervision but those that did not have that

support suffered more than those that did not. But without the support students were able to create more independence.

## **Method and Procedures**

My work began in the questioning stage. As I was sitting with my 5 year old daughter working on homework I was realizing how much time it takes to get through homework assignments. It didn't make too much sense that in just her first year of schooling she is assigned enough homework to take up 30-40 minutes. It seemed like a lot of homework for a 5 year old to be working on. In my personal life I believed kids at that age shouldn't get so much work that they may begin to resent school work; they should of course practice but at most a few minutes a night at the early ages.

This helped spark my questioning. I presented some themes to my professor whom i worked with to help narrow my capstone project into something that was specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based.

Learning how to use the ebsco scholarly journal sites to find relevant articles.- Our paper had a requirement to find scholarly journal articles as credible resources. This meant that we had to learn how to use the resources at the CSUMB library to find these sources. What I learned is that simply typing in a query returns vast amounts of articles that you have to sift through for relevant articles. Learning how to find relevant articles that are recent enough to be credible resources was a large task in itself. I used this to find sources I could use to support my thoughts. I learned that these papers themselves also require their

authors to find other articles that can support or oppose their theses to give them credibility; these in turn helped me find articles that presented me with more support for my own paper. Unfortunately these papers are written in a way that made it difficult for me to get through easily.

Trying to decipher the literary journal and taking notes- As I learned when I began my literary research, most of the articles are full of scholarly jargon that I was unfamiliar with. These papers are written for a scholar audience and do not try to communicate in the most efficient way. I believe that most of these papers have page limit requirements so authors are always trying to increase their word count by filling sentences with unnecessarily complex sentences rather than just getting to the point. This made finding the actual findings and relevant information for my paper a major time investment. Future Capstone students should account for this extra time to wade through papers to find the gold.

Applying the actual relevant information- Once I found information I found to be interesting and relevant to my thesis I needed to strategize how to use it and which I could use to reinforce my stance. I used Outlines and webs to help organize these findings to help me get rid of any unnecessary topics that could not fit into my page limitations and allow me enough time to keep up with other assignments as well. This allowed me to prepare information to discuss with my interviewees and surveys.

Moving on to my next stage of contacting relevant contacts and setting up interviews with them was fairly straightforward. I would contact the front office of different schools I was familiar with to ask for the principals email or contact information and give them a small

description of the project I was working on and how they could help. I worked on a script for this so I could ensure that I did not leave out any vital details. Following this I sent them some possible dates and times for an interview via email with a reminder call. With these interviews confirmed I then prepared for the questions I would be asking

Creating relevant lines of questioning for interviews and surveys- To make sure that no time was wasted on the interviews not being sure what I wanted to discuss I worked on making some questions that I really wanted to ask. This took a couple revisions to make sure that the questions would lead well into one another. I made sure to include some of the findings from my literature review into the questions to see what the interviewees thought about these findings and how they might apply them to their work.

To accompany this I was working on creating surveys for parents and students to answer some questions about the homework that they work on. I needed to make sure that I had a balance of qualitative and quantitative questioning to be considered fair assessment.

Adjusting to Coronavirus pandemic and adjusting how paper would be. Some of these steps then had to be changed because of the Corona Pandemic. Namely the Interview and survey section. The Capstone panel decided that it would be best to forgo any remaining interviewing and requests from people outside of the university to not inconvenience others while adjusting to the new changes in people's daily lives. This meant that I would be focusing my paper much more on literature. review.

## **Results, Findings, and Discussion**

I found that there are many different views on homework and that has changed throughout the years. Unfortunately formalized government mandated education is a relatively young thing. There are not thousands of years of research on how to provide the best form of education for each kid. There is no handbook for each situation and students behaviours and methods for learning. This is difficult to provide and much more difficult to fund. In the United States we also deal with many factors as well. We are one of the rare countries with private schools and charter schools that the most wealthy classes send their students too, lots of funds are poured into these schools and not as much as the public schools.

As a result I learned that in the younger ages I have believed that limiting the amount of homework you get is greatly important in the long-term goal of building a love and interest in homework. As well as changing the way that we focus on education in the classroom, looking at Finland's emphasis on group learning and focus on teaching students how to learn rather than simply focusing on what to learn.

I also found that homework isn't something that should be considered strictly harmful, when balanced with other things it can be incredibly beneficial to the learning of students and their interest in things as well.

## **Problems and Limitations 1-2 pages**

During the spring of 2020 a remarkable occurrence impacted the entire world. The Corona Virus which later became known as the Covid-19 Pandemic spread throughout the world

which was thoroughly unprepared for the effects it would have on the world. In just a few short months the virus went from impacting one city in China to almost every country. Countries closed themselves off to each other. People were no longer allowed to gather in groups larger than 10. As a result this meant schools, sports, churches, community centres, parks, universities, concerts, places of work, were now shut down. Almost every person in the world was and are still affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in one way or the other. I state this as a fore-word to the problems and limitations that it had on my Capstone project to highlight that what happened to my paper is so minimal compared to the effects that it has had on so many.

### **Limits**

During my planning stages of my work I had planned on working with teachers, administrators, and families to see how homework was impacting the daily lives of families and teachers. I also wanted to learn from teachers and administrators their views and techniques on homework. These views and experiences would help me to find if the information that I learned during my literature review was supported by the people that I was learning from. I had been speaking to teachers at Big Sur Charter and Crumpton elementary in MPUSD as well as Alianza Charter School and Linscott charter school in PVUSD. It was important for me to show that in the working class, families are impacted by many factors that impact these families much more than families who may have a parent at home or someone else to help with the kids.



As the interview stages were approaching it became obvious that the world was changing. Due to covid-19 CSUMB and the liberal studies Capstone department decided it would be best to ask students to forget the interview stages to alleviate any inconveniences this may cause for interviewees as they dealt with a changing world and responsibilities. This inevitably forced my own Capstone Project to become more heavily focused on literature review.

### **Problems**

I have never been a person who focuses on what one may describe as the scholarly skills. Such as reviewing others research and scholarly journals. I enjoy spending my time in the field similar to an anthropologist and listening and immersing myself with people. I want to see how people are interacting with their work and learning in their homes and classrooms. This type of learning forced me to break out of my comfort zone, it was a great challenge that I dealt with every single day. Immersing myself into Scholarly Journals which I was unaccustomed to ever using and reading words that I had never read was stressful. This issue was something that couldn't simply be solved by the assistance of my professor. This became another problem for not only myself but for hundreds of thousands of university students all over the country. Similar to the way that I work in my research I do my best work in the classroom. Discussions and working with my classmates is where I feel I shine as well. Having this taken away from me and having to find the self drive to work on things on my own turned out to be another problem that I had not expected.

## Work Cited

- Cooper, Harris, Jorgianne Civey Robinson, and Erika A Patall. "Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987–2003." *Review of Educational Research* 76.1 (2006): 1-62. Web.
- Cooper, H., & Valentine, J.C. (2001). Using research to answer practical questions about homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3),
- Corno, L. (2000). Looking at homework differently. *Elementary School Journal*, 100(5)
- Corono, L., & Xu, J. (n.d.). Homework as the Job of Childhood. Retrieved from [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4303\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4303_9)
- Epstein, J.L., & Van Voorhis, F.L. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' roles in designing homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3),
- Gill, B. P., & Schlossman, S. L. (2004). Villain or savior? The American discourse on homework, 1850– 2003. *Theory into Practice*, 43 (3),
- Gonida, E. N., & Cortina, K. S. (2014). Parental Involvement in Homework: Relations with Parent and Student Achievement-Related Motivational Beliefs and Achievement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(3), 376–396.
- Hofferth, S. L., & Sandberg, J. F. (2000). *Changes in American children's time, 1981– 1997*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Population Studies Center.
- Kouzma, N. M., & Kennedy, G. A. (2002). Homework, stress, and mood disturbance in senior high school students. *Psychological Reports*, 91, 193–198.

- Loveless, T. (2003). The 2003 Brown Center Report on American education: How well are American students learning? With sections on homework, charter schools, and rural school achievement. Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC.
- McName, A.S. & DeChiara, E. (196). Inviting Stories To Help Young Children Cope With Stressful Life Experiences. ERIC No. ED39081.
- Oehlberg, B. (196). Making It Better: Activities for Children Living in Stressful World. ERIC No. ED401039.
- Omizo, M. (1988). Children and Stress: An Exploratory Study of Stressors and Symptoms. *School Counselor*, 35(4), 267-74.
- Paula, N. (1995). Helping your child with homework. Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.
- Reilly, K. (2016, August 30). Homework: Is It Good for Kids? Here's What the Research Says. Retrieved from <https://time.com/4466390/homework-debate-research/>
- unknown. "Finland: Instructional Systems." NCEE, [ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/finland-overview/finland-instructional-systems/](http://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/finland-overview/finland-instructional-systems/).
- Vatterott, C., & Gale Group. (2009). Rethinking homework best practices that support diverse needs (Gale virtual reference library). Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Xu, J., & Corno, L. (1998). Case studies of families doing third-grade homework. *Teachers College Record*, 100(2)