A Teacher's Guide to *Homework Tips for Parents*

Talking Points for Presenters to Use with Transparencies

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A Teacher's Guide to Homework Tips for Parents

Talking Points for Overheads

Overhead 2—Cover Slide:

This information was developed by the U.S. Department of Education to assist parents, caregivers and teachers in understanding the importance of homework and the role that parental involvement plays in assigning homework.

Overhead 3—True or False?

1. Homework should only be given to students in grades four and above.

False. Homework can have many benefits for children in the primary grades. It can improve a child's ability to remember and understand schoolwork. Homework can help students develop study skills that will be of value even after they leave school. It can teach them that learning takes place anywhere, not just in the classroom. Homework can benefit children in more general ways as well. It can foster positive character traits such as independence and responsibility. Homework can teach children how to manage time. Experts agree that the amount of homework should depend on the age and skills of the student. Many national groups of teachers and parents, including the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), suggest that homework for children in kindergarten through second grade is most effective when it does not exceed 10-20 minutes each day. In third through sixth grade, children can benefit from 30-60 minutes of homework per day. Junior high and high school students can benefit from more time on homework, and the amount may vary from night to night. Reading at home is especially important for young children. Reading assignments might push the time on homework a bit beyond the minutes suggested above.

2. Assigned homework should focus only on one aspect of learning.

False. Homework assignments typically have one or more purposes. The most common purpose is to have students practice material already presented in class. Practice homework is meant to reinforce learning and help the student master specific skills. Preparation homework introduces material that will be presented in future lessons. These assignments aim to help students learn new material better when it is covered in class. Extension homework asks students to apply skills they already have to new situations. Integration homework requires the student to apply many different skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or creative writing.

Overhead 4—True or False?

3. <u>If a child is having trouble with his or her homework, parents should reach out to the teacher or school for help.</u>

True. Knowing about homework assignments can involve parents in the schooling process in a positive way and accelerate a child's learning. It can give parents firsthand information about what students are learning and how well their child is doing in school. It can also give them an opportunity to express supportive attitudes about the value of success in school. Talking with teachers about homework can help parents understand what is expected of students and generally improve communication between the family and the school. Research shows that parent involvement can have either a positive or negative impact on the value of homework. Although parents should avoid interfering in the independent completion of assignments, if a child is having difficulty with homework, parents should become involved by discussing the issue with the teacher and asking how they might help.

4. <u>All homework will have a positive impact on students in the long run.</u>

False. Homework that is not properly assigned and monitored can also have negative effects on children. Educators and parents worry that students will grow bored if they are required to spend too much time on schoolwork. Homework can prevent children from taking part in leisure-time and community activities that also teach important life skills. Homework can lead to undesirable character traits if it promotes cheating, either through the copying of assignments or help with homework that goes beyond tutoring. The issue for educators and parents is not which list of effects, the positive or negative, is correct. To a degree, both are. It is the job of parents and educators to make the most of the benefits of homework and minimize the costs. Homework policies and practices should give teachers and parents the flexibility to take into account the unique needs and circumstances of their students. That way, they can maximize the positive effects of homework and minimize negative the ones.

Overhead 5— What Teachers Can Tell Parents About Homework

- *Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.*
  Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- *Make sure the materials your child needs–such as paper, pencils and a dictionary– are available.*
  Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.
- *Help your child with time management.*
  Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- *Be positive about homework.*
  Tell your child how important homework is to school performance. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.

Overhead 6— What Teachers Can Tell Parents About Homework

- *When your child does homework, you do "homework," such as balancing a checkbook.*
  Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.
- *When your child asks for help, provide guidance,* ***not*** *answers.*
  Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him.
- *When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it.*
  Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.
- *If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away.*
  Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.

Overhead 7— What Teachers Can Tell Parents About Homework

- *Stay informed about your child's school assignments.*
  Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.
- *Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.*
  Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.
- *Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration.*
  Let your child take a short break if she is having trouble keeping their mind on an assignment.
- *Reward progress in homework.*
  If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park) to reinforce the positive effort.

Overhead 8—Homework Tips on Reading: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Have your child read aloud to you every night.
- Choose a quiet place, free from distractions, for your child to do his nightly reading assignments.
- As your child reads, point out spelling and sound patterns such as *cat, pat, hat.*

Overhead 9—Homework Tips on Reading: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- When your child reads aloud to you and makes a mistake, point out the words she has missed and help her to read the word correctly.

- After your child has stopped to correct a word he has read, have him go back and reread the entire sentence from the beginning to make sure he understands what the sentence is saying.

Overhead 10—Homework Tips on Reading: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Ask your child to tell you in her own words what happened in a story.
- To check your child's understanding of what he is reading, occasionally pause and ask your child questions about the characters and events in the story.

Overhead 11—Homework Tips on Reading: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Ask your child why she thinks a character acted in a certain way and ask your child to support her answer with information from the story.

- Before getting to the end of a story, ask your child what he thinks will happen next and why.

Overhead 12—*Homework Tips on Math: What Teachers Can Tell Parents*

- Encourage your child to use a daily math assignment book.
- Check with your child daily about his homework.
- If your child is experiencing problems in math, contact the teacher.

Overhead 13—Homework Tips on Math: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Encourage the principal to use research-based peer tutoring programs for math.

- Try to be aware of how your child is being taught math, and don't teach strategies and shortcuts that conflict with the approach the teacher is using.

Overhead 14—Homework Tips on Math: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Engage in frequent communication with your child's teacher.
- Request that your child's teacher schedule after-school math tutoring sessions if your child really needs help.

Overhead 15—Homework Tips on Math: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Check in with the teacher and ask what you can do to help.
- Ask the teacher about online resources that you can use with your child at home.

Overhead 16—Homework Tips on Math: What Teachers Can Tell Parents

- Use household chores as opportunities for reinforcing math learning such as cooking and repair activities.