



“Homework Hassle.... or Not” by Steve Ross

During my years in education as a teacher and a principal, an issue that has always sparked debate and discussion is homework. How much homework should a student get each night? What is the purpose of homework? Should parents help with homework? Should parents check or correct their child’s homework? What if a child does not understand the homework assigned? Does homework improve learning or test scores? Should there even be homework? At what grade level should homework begin? What if homework is too easy? Should there be homework on the weekends? What if a student has no time for homework (because of activities, free play after school, or special occasions)? Should homework be the same for every student in a class?

I have read many articles about homework, citing various studies on the subject. Many are in favor of homework, especially if it was the “right amount” or the “right kind” of homework, under the “right” circumstances. I have read articles which presented research against assigning homework, claiming homework causes more harm than good, that any benefits for homework were outweighed by the consequences, or that homework has little impact on learning. Homework is one of those topics that you could probably find articles that support your beliefs about homework, no matter what your beliefs are. Based on my years of experience and the many articles I have read, from my perspective (the cool thing about being principal, you can have a perspective), homework should help children to develop study habits, reinforce or extend learning, and help parents to be involved and engaged in school. Also, generally speaking, students should be able to independently complete their homework, within a reasonable amount of focused time and a reasonable amount of effort, giving them time for after school activities, including free play, music lessons, sports and family time.

One important characteristic of a great independent school is to have a clearly stated Mission and Vision and to have decisions grounded in best practice, its Mission and its Vision. Our homework policy, which you can find on page 34 of our Parent/Student handbook is based on research, grounded in our beliefs about learning and students, and our school’s Mission and Vision.

According to ISLAND PACIFIC ACADEMY’S Mission Statement, one of our goals is to maximize the use of students’ intellectual, academic, physical, artistic and creative gifts to support life-long learning. As a part of the school’s Vision, we hope to “provide children with an academically challenging and developmentally appropriate educational experience” in an environment that “promotes inquiry, creativity and critical thinking, along with the acquisition of important fundamental skills and knowledge to prepare students for future success.” These statements and beliefs specifically inform our homework policy, which includes the following





“ISLAND PACIFIC ACADEMY believes that homework can help foster a positive attitude about learning for each child. Homework can give children another opportunity to practice skills that have been taught in the classroom and expand their level of curiosity. Homework is an advantage to students when the purpose is one or several of the following: to reinforce and practice skills that have been taught; prepare and introduce materials for an upcoming lesson, especially in upper grades; extend the class lesson; and/or to stimulate a child’s desire to expand his/her own knowledge and desire to learn.”

“ISLAND PACIFIC ACADEMY wants to nurture well-rounded individuals and this extends outside of the classroom. Students need to have personal time to discover who they are and enjoy life.”

An additional goal of homework for us at ISLAND PACIFIC ACADEMY is to nurture the development of responsibility. According to our homework policy, “Homework is an important way to help a student become involved in and responsible for his/her learning. Teachers and parents should be involved in the process, but the students should also take responsibility for their work. Students should take pride in the homework that they complete and need to be responsible to remember to turn it in each morning.”

I would like to close my thoughts about homework with my belief, also supported by research, that one of the biggest impacts on learning and educational success for students is parent involvement.

There are many ways parents at IPA are involved in their child’s education, from volunteering in the classroom, attending parent conferences and school meetings, and assisting with fundraisers. Homework can serve as another opportunity for parents to be involved with their child’s education. It gives them an opportunity to talk with their children about what is being learned in school. Parents can read with their children. They can help establish a set time and quiet learning space for homework to be completed. They can help make sure their child has all of the supplies and materials needed to do their homework. Parents can help their child be more organized and manage their time. They can also let teachers know if there are challenges surrounding homework with the understanding that teachers are there to help and support them and their child.

Thank you for taking the time to read my perspectives about homework. I hope they were helpful. If you would have any questions, wonderings or ideas about homework or any educational topic (or baseball), please do not hesitate to come see me. I would enjoy the opportunity to exchange ideas with you.

Please find attached a checklist from the US Department of Education, providing ideas for parents to help with their children’s homework.





US Department of Education: Checklist for Helping Your Child With Homework

Show That You Think Education and Homework Are Important

- Do you set a regular time every day for homework?
- Does your child have the papers, books, pencils and other things needed to do assignments?
- Does your child have a well-lit, fairly quiet place to study?
- Do you set a good example by showing your child that the skills he is learning are an important part of the things he will do as an adult?
- Do you stay in touch with your child's teacher?

Monitor Assignments

- Do you know what your child's homework assignments are? How long they should take? How the teacher wants you to be involved in them?
- Do you see that your child starts and completes assignments?
- Do you read the teacher's comments on assignments that are returned?
- Is TV viewing or video game playing cutting into your child's homework time?

Provide Guidance

- Do you help your child to get organized? Does your child need a schedule or assignment book? A book bag or backpack and a folder for papers?
- Do you encourage your child to develop good study habits (for example, scheduling enough time for big assignments; making up practice tests)?
- Do you talk with your child about homework assignments? Does she understand them?

Talk with Teachers to Resolve Problems

- Do you meet with the teacher early in the year before any problems arise?
- If a problem comes up, do you meet with the teacher?
- Do you cooperate with the teacher to work out a plan and a schedule to solve homework problems?
- Do you follow up with the teacher and with your child to make sure the plan is working?

