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Homework: The Bane of Students' Existence or No?

Is homework beneficial or detrimental to high school students? The topic of homework is nothing new and there have been endless debates regarding the necessity of homework being questioned by students and concerned parents. It is no surprise that high school students are given homework daily for each class with false promises of keeping it under 30 minutes per class. Most importantly, even though balancing huge amounts of homework with extracurriculars is a struggle, homework is a crucial part of being successful in academics and the real world. In fact, many studies have confirmed that certain formats of homework such as project-based or plain worksheets affect students' learning differently. While project-based learning is open-ended and connects to the real world, monotonous assignments like worksheets and book work have opposite effects by being repetitive and limiting – often hindering the student's ability to explore on their own. The amount and type of homework given everyday positively impacts high school students by helping them develop important independent study skills despite any potential health consequences and poor habits that may arise.

Regardless of the negative impacts on students' health, increasing the amount of homework encourages the development of students' independent study skills such as time management and organization. In general, there are many benefits to being assigned homework because it forces students to be organized, learn how to prioritize their tasks, and manage their

time well. Almost all high school students spend around seven long hours at school and feel completely burnt out after their extracurriculars, sports, or clubs. Furthermore, students do not have the ability to relax once they get home because their rigorous workload often piles up by the end of the school day. This creates unhealthy situations that have an impact on mental health, “In high school, around 65% of students deal with severe anxiety and 52% are diagnosed with depression as those students do not get to have time to be a kid anymore before having to enter adulthood in college”(Sadiq). To some extent, this is true because high school students simply cannot be kids anymore; it is time to grow up and think about the future. Although they do not have much time to complete their homework, students have the ability to explore time-management strategies and learn what best works for them. They acquire important skills like learning to prioritize work according to the amount of homework, due dates and long term assignments. Balancing personal commitments with academic responsibilities is a hardship all on its own, but it will prove its beneficial value in the long run. However, many anti-homework students and parents argue that “too much homework can diminish its effectiveness and even be counterproductive”(Parker). Having a large amount of homework due leads to stress and procrastination which is commonly used as a coping mechanism that provides momentary relief for students. Nevertheless, the retention of class material improves significantly when assigned a lot of homework. It reinforces content and truly promotes students’ comprehension as “There’s a reason why practice makes perfect”(UoPeople). There is a component of self-discipline that fosters the development of one’s independent study skills. Students gain a deeper understanding of a topic every problem they attempt to solve or visualize. Clearly, the academic benefits and skills developed outweigh the possible health consequences that students may face.

Compared to tedious worksheets, project-based homework is more effective by building students' intrinsic motivation and containing real world applications. Project-based homework has more advantages and is often preferred by high school students over excessive homework assignments due to long-term knowledge retention and being given a choice. Since it “builds student choice into the process”, they have more motivation and foster better learning habits, improving their overall mindset towards learning and school (PowerSchool). Furthermore, well-structured homework such as research projects, also enables students to develop critical thinking skills and a sense of independence – which would build a firmer foundation by having them dive deeper into the material in their own time without the pressure of tests. It should be noted that project-based assignments are usually long-term and compel students to prioritize the tasks, and most importantly, stay on track. This is extremely advantageous as project-based homework also prepares students for the real world as “solving real-world issues that matter is important to us as adults—and it is important to our students” (PowerSchool). Currently, successful careers are recognized for their contribution to various projects and challenges; changing the type of homework high school students are assigned to project-based will prepare them better for the project-based world. However, the majority of highschools still implement traditional homework, leading to the question of to what extent is it actually helpful? To begin, it is clear that excessive homework assignments tend to have opposite effects when compared to project-based. If the tasks given are overly repetitive, unrelated to the current learning material, or not challenging enough, students often “do homework they see as "pointless" or "mindless" to keep their grades up” (Parker). There is no learning component to these tedious worksheets as they have students practicing the same skills repeatedly which tends to cause a loss of focus. Nevertheless, teachers argue that some students “never would have done their basic reading if

they had not been trained to complete expected assignments”(Engle). Sometimes, these excessive assignments lead to students developing a stronger foundation due to the countless repetition. While they may be useful to hone a particular skill, these ‘mindless’ worksheets also encourage poor habits such as procrastination and correlate to a loss of motivation in high school students. Therefore, project-based homework exceeds the criteria for benefiting students academically and personally when compared to excessive homework.

To conclude, the type and the amount of homework that high schoolers are assigned daily influences their independent study skills and their well-being. Certain types of homework – such as project-based assignments –and increasing the amount of homework, build essential skills like time management and organization. Finding a balance regarding the amount and the type of homework is a crucial goal for the future of all high schools in order to lessen the negative impacts on students’ health. By attempting to optimize the learning process as a whole, homework can be a powerful tool for learning when utilized effectively.

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