Abstract – This paper studies in detail about the concept of homework, its objective and its importance for students. It describes both the positive and negative outcomes of homework. It also highlights on how students get mentally affected due to excess homework causing their performance to deteriorate in future exams. This content includes some comments said by some parents and students during past research.

Index Terms – Authenticity, Hyperactive, Obesity, Sleep Deprivation, Sedentary activity

INTRODUCTION

Homework, or homework assignment, refers to tasks assigned to students by their teachers to be completed outside of class. Common homework assignments may include a quantity or period of reading to be performed, writing or typing to be completed, problems to be solved, a school project to be built or other skills to be practiced. It is described as preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).

A day of school, an hour or two on the soccer field, 30 minutes of piano practice, and suddenly its dinner time. Your child is tired, grumpy, and overwhelmed at the prospect of several hours of reading and geometry still to come. You know you are about to enter a war zone with homework at the heart of the battle. Every school day brings something new, but there is one status quo most parents expect: homework. The old adage that practice makes perfect seems to make sense when it comes to schoolwork. But, while hunkering down after dinner amongst books and worksheets might seem like a natural part of childhood, there's more research now than ever suggesting that it shouldn't be so [1].

The basic objectives of assigning homework to students are the same as schooling in general: To increase the knowledge and improve the abilities and skills of the students. However, opponents of homework cite homework as rote, or grind work, designed to take up children's time, without offering tangible benefit [2]. Homework may be designed to reinforce what students have already learned, prepare them for upcoming (or complex or difficult) lessons, extend what they know by having them apply it to new situations, or to integrate their abilities by applying many different skills to a single task. Homework also provides an opportunity for parents to participate in their children's education [3].

There are three types of homework: practice, preparation, and extension. Practice reinforces new skills. For example, a student may be given a set of math problems for homework that are similar to the ones completed in class. Preparation helps students prepare for future classroom activities such background research on an upcoming topic. Extension is normally a long-term project that goes along with class work throughout the year. Examples are term papers or science fair projects [4].

HISTORY OF HOMEWORK

It seems as though they have been around forever. Historically, homework was frowned upon in American culture. With few students interested in higher education, and due to the necessity to complete daily chores, homework was discouraged not only by parents, but also by school districts. In 1901, California legislature passed an act that effectively abolished homework for those who attended kindergarten through the eighth grade. But, in the 1950s, with increasing pressure on the United States to stay ahead in the Cold War, homework made resurgence, and children were encouraged to keep up with their Russian counterparts. By the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the consensus in American education was overwhelmingly in favor of issuing homework to students of all grade levels [3].

In a study done at the University of Michigan in 2007, research concluded that the amount of homework given is increasing over time. In a sample taken of students between the ages of 6 and 9, it was shown that students spend more than two hours a week on homework, as opposed to 44 minutes in 1981. Harris Cooper, nations top homework scholar, concluded after a comprehensive review that homework does not improve academic achievements for grade school students. Cooper analyzed dozens of students and found that kids who are assigned homework in middle and high school actually score "somewhat" better on standardized tests, but that kids who do 60 to 90 minutes of homework in middle school and more than 2 hours in high school actually score worse [3].

In the 1800s the majority of children did not go to school beyond grammar school. Those who did, ended up having to do “memorization and drilling of facts” (Gill and Schlossman, 1996). During the 1900s restrictions were placed on homework. California homework law in 1901 is...
declared “children under the age of 15 should not have to do any. It is better that children should play in the sunshine, reformers said”. Schools began increasing the amount of homework in the 1980s and 1990s, especially for younger students. Today “it is unusual to find schools that do not give homework, and many school systems require it” [4].

**Objective of Homework**

“Why is homework important?” is a question asked numerous times throughout the year by students. Many teachers and parents agree that homework develops students’ initiative and responsibility and fulfills the expectations of students, parents, and the public (Mar. 1996). The case for homework has toughened because of the relationship between homework and student achievement. Grades attract the most attention but provide the least information. In general academics, grading is defined Evaluation of performance by assigning a grade or score.

The objective of homework is to assist and improve learning and to strengthen skills and understandings gained in the classroom. Homework is a valuable tool in the learning process; it is a natural extension of class work created and designed by the teacher. Research shows that homework increases student achievement. It offers teachers, parents and students the opportunity to be involved in and support the learning process outside of school [5]. For example in North Crowley, students will be given appropriate, relevant and meaningful homework with some guidelines:

1. Stated Purpose
2. Proper estimated time of study and completion
3. Differentiated to challenge each student according to their academic capabilities.

In addition, homework will be designated the following:

1. Practice
2. Preparation
3. Elaboration/Extension/Enrichment
4. Reading
5. Study
6. Creativity/Authenticity

The timely completion of each homework assignment shall be a shared responsibility of the student, parent and teacher in achieving the homework objective.

There has always been the question of how much homework is too much. The article How Important is Homework explains that it varies by grade. No more than twenty minutes a day should be spent on homework for students in kindergarten through third grade. Fourth through sixth grade is to have twenty to forty minutes of homework a day while it varies from seventh grade to twelfth grade. For the latter, the amount of homework depends mostly on the number and type of classes being taken However, anything over two hours a night is not suitable.

“A typical homework completing high school student will outperform students who do not do homework by 69% on standardized tests” (plate, 2000). Homework reinforces work done in school promotes student initiative, independence, and responsibility, and brings both home and school closer. With homework, critical thinking and concept information are increased and students retain information and understand material better.

With homework comes the temptation to cheat in order to get the assignment completed on time. The amount of time needed for homework limits the students' time for other activities within the community. Teachers should not use homework as a type of punishment because it takes away from the purpose of homework. Homework should also be connected to what is going on in the class or what will be going on in the class. A reasonable amount of homework should also be given [4].

**Effect of Homework on Students**

Having discussed the positive benefits of homework, we cannot ignore the negative ones which seem to outweigh the positive ones. In the back of a father’s mind, he has always known homework was bad. His children come home every day with tons of it in their backpacks. They have been through a long day at school, but he has to tell them they cannot relax and instead must do their homework. But maybe this does not pay off, and maybe instead of helping, this work is hurting your children. Homework has been around for a long time, being banned and reinstated numerous times. Homework has recently increased, but some schools have started to limit it. If homework is too excessive, it can be counterproductive and have a negative impact on the health of students.

In the 1900’s, homework was banned for the first time. It was considered child labor to force kids to sit at a desk instead of spending time outside. Back then, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) wasn’t much of a problem because kids who had it would just spend more time outside. Today, the same children are given drugs so they can sit down and do work. In the late 50’s, Russia launched their Sputnik satellite. The U.S. feared that their new generation would not be able to keep pace with their Cold War adversaries. Homework was increased under the belief that it would increase the intelligence of the next generation. In the late 60s and early 70s, homework was banned again. The schools thought that kids should be able to enjoy their nights like their parents could. However, the U.S. Department of Education then published a book called A Nation at Risk. It blamed the small amount of homework for the weak economy. Because of this homework was again increased. In 2002, homework was further increased. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 increased homework in order to raise test scores [6].

Recently, some progressive schools have begun to look at the research against homework and have reduced the amount assigned. Many well-respected schools are trying to make assignments worth the students’ time. Greenville, South Carolina reduced nightly homework and also how much homework affected the students’ final term grade [7].
Wellesley High School here in Massachusetts banished midterms. On top of that, it has is students more free time and opportunities to do work in school and are making sure the students fully understand the homework before they leave school. The Harvard-Westlake School in LA now has a 3 hour per course per week limit. However, a lot of students work at different paces. An assignment that takes one student 10 minutes could take another one an hour. Giving children hours of homework when they should be outside playing can lead to-and has led to – the obesity epidemic. To place children in a situation in which they cannot get enough physical activity to doom them to ill health. It’s not just the parents’ problem; it’s a public health issue.

The University of Michigan found that time spent on homework has increased by 51% since 1980. It also found that since 1981, the amount of time kids spend playing sports has decreased 58% for 6-8 year olds, 19% for 9-11 year olds, 43% for 12-14 year olds, and 28% for 15-17 year olds. The Center for Disease Control says that since 1980, the number of overweight American children has tripled. Robert Melina, a physical education professor who co-authored a review of studies about exercise for children states:

All the evidence seems to suggest that the increase in childhood obesity is related largely to reductions in physical activity, more so than major changes in diet. Diet plays a part. But the lack of physical activity has a bigger impact.

There have been countless studies that conclude television and video games lead to weight gain. What if those studies could also apply to homework? Melinda Sothern, a pediatric obesity expert, says, “There is absolutely no physiological difference between watching TV and doing homework”. Homework and watching TV are both sedentary activities that involve sitting down and not moving for extended periods of time. When student’s schedules are already crammed with sports, music lessons, family activities, chores, etc. homework can be very inconvenient. In order to make time for homework, students must stay up later. This causes sleep deprivation. One of the nation’s leading experts on sleep, James B. Maas, PhD comments, "Almost all teen-agers, as they reach puberty, become walking zombies because they are getting far too little sleep," There are many problems that effect school performance with sleep deprivations that will not be elaborated on [11]. An anonymous mother of a fourth-grade student worries:

“My daughter just can’t face more work after being in school all day. She has a terrible time just thinking about the fact that there is homework in her backpack. Lately, she’s been taken to saying, ‘I wish I were dead’” [9].

Homework can put students under a great deal of stress. A study done by the Stanford University School of Medicine states the number of 7-17 year olds has more than doubled from 1995 to 2002. A Surgeon’s General report in 1999 found 13% of 9-17 year old kids have anxiety disorders. In 1990 the Mount Sinai School of Medicine found that 31% of students worried a lot and 47% were victims of insomnia. (Bennett and Kalish 113) There is obviously a major amount of stress in these students’ lives, and although there are other reasons for it, homework is obviously not helping.

CONCLUSION

In summation, there are basically pros and cons as mentioned above. An increase in work, both at home and in school, means less physical activity for students, which can be directly linked to health issues among students. These negative aspects of homework have even led schools to ban midterms in order to limit the homework-induced stress of students. Besides a complete ban, recommendations to address this issue focus on major reductions in the amount of homework assigned. Understanding these important issues surrounding excessive homework helps people become aware of the negative effects and gives people insight into how to make changes to improve the situation of homework that doesn’t work. The solution is not to totally eradicate homework. We could reduce homework to 10 minutes per grade level. First grade would receive 10 minutes; second grade would receive 20 minutes, and so on. The only two issues with this strategy are that teacher communication would be very important, and teachers would have to address students who take longer to work. If schools can overcome these goals, this strategy could be very useful. Another idea is to totally ban homework except for reading, projects, and catch-up work. If students are falling behind in classes, the work would have to be completed at home [10].

REFERENCES