



Did You Know...?

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Homework: Hassles & Strategies

Parents Reaching Out connects with families, schools and communities in New Mexico. We offer information from many reliable sources. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their PEN Notes publications in this information series.

Homework: A Three Way Battle

A parent may think the teacher is assigning work that is too difficult or boring, or the material isn't explained clearly. The student feels it's unfair to have to do anything academic once he gets home. And parents can rarely avoid getting emotionally involved! There is often a mental or emotional block getting in the way of studying. It is our job as parents to help our children understand how their minds function, so they can do their homework using the most efficient methods possible.

Ways to do this are:

1. Get rid of negative feelings
2. Schedule a regular homework time
3. Be a consultant to your child and look at all assignments
4. Break down assignment into manageable tasks
5. Provide a regular study space and necessary school supplies
6. Tune into you child's feeling



Homework can help Children:

- Practice what they have learned in school
- Get ready for the next day's classes
- Use resources, such as libraries and encyclopedias and computer resources
- Learn things they don't have time to learn in school

Homework develops children's initiative and responsibility, and they will grow up to be more responsible, disciplined adults.

Homework can also help children learn good habits and attitudes. It also gives the parents a chance to become involved in their child's education, which in turn shows the child that education is important.

Homework doesn't have to be a battle. With the right support, parents can help children aid themselves in learning how to study and take responsibility for daily assignments.

Parent/child power struggles can be resolved:

Judy liked to talk on the phone throughout the evening and she wasn't doing well in school. Her parents made an agreement with her that she would unplug her phone during homework time, but they would let her leave her answering machine on so when she had finished her homework she could return the calls. It worked nicely for both Judy and her parents.

Be aware of how much time is spent on homework. If a child is struggling to complete the work in a reasonable time, schedule a conference with the teacher and talk about the problem.

When checking homework, catch the child in the middle so that if he is doing something wrong, you can help him get on the right track. Don't wait to check the homework until after the child has completed it, when he may have to go back and redo the whole assignment. Any child hates that!

For a young child, a spot at the dining room table while you are cooking dinner, sewing, or reading near by may just be the ticket. You are there if your child gets off task or needs assistance. Television should be off during homework, but studies have shown some children do better with music, as opposed to complete silence.

When helping children with homework, each parent has individual skills, tolerance levels, patience and personality traits. One may be more successful working with a particular child's needs, learning style and personality than the other. One might be able to explain a particular subject matter more clearly. Time is another factor.



Provide guidance – but don't do the homework for your child:

It can be difficult for parents to let children work through problems themselves and learn from their mistakes. It's also hard to know where to draw the line between supporting and doing.

One of the first rules to remember is that "It is not your homework – it is your child's homework." Doing assignments for your child won't help him understand and use information and it won't help him become confident in his own abilities.

Remember you are your child's first teacher. You know your child better than anyone else. The one most important thing you can do for your child is to read, read, read to your child until he is ready to read to you and then take turns reading.

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