Homework Assignments

Why Is This Strategy Useful?

Homework is not simply busy-work assigned to children to keep them occupied at home. Homework assignments and studying serve several educational needs that are essential to receiving a complete education. They provide an opportunity for children to develop self-discipline, study habits, and time management skills; also children enjoy a feeling of accomplishment when their homework goals are met. Homework also closes the gap between school and home. Homework assignments extend the educational day, giving students opportunity to fully digest the content material and comprehend the strategies being taught to them. Research indicates that homework is not limited to helping general education students, many students with learning disabilities and extensive educational needs benefit from homework assignments.

Description of Strategy

Homework assignments are out of class tasks given to students as an extension or enhancement of classroom instruction. According to many experts, there are three basic types of homework assignments: practice, preparation and extension.

- Practice homework reinforces newly learned skills, giving students the opportunity to review what they learned in class.
- Preparation homework aims to prepare students for the next day of class. These assignments include researching a topic or brainstorming for a future lesson.
- Extension homework are long-term assignments usually correlating to in class lessons; examples of these assignments would be term papers or projects and presentations.

When implementing homework as a strategy to engage students and create excitement about learning, teachers should assess their classroom lesson plans and be sure to align homework with the content material. Research also suggests that homework is more beneficial to students in secondary school than in elementary school, and lengthy homework assignments can have negative effects.

Research Evidence

One meta-analysis of research on the relationship between homework and mathematics achievement concluded that overall, homework can improve achievement. In addition, at least one quasi-experimental study and one correlational study support the use of homework assignments to enhance mathematics achievement. The results of the correlational study including that frequent (but not lengthy) homework assignments were positively related to achievement gains. The results of the quasi-experimental study indicated that students benefited from the supplemental homework assignments.
Sample Studies Supporting this Strategy


The meta-analysis described in this research brief identified six studies that compared students with homework to those who did not have homework and found that the results provided a clear picture that homework can be effective in improving students’ scores on unit tests. In addition, the researchers identified 12 studies that tested causal models of the relationship between homework and achievement, and in 11 of these, they detected a positive relationship between time on homework and achievement. Finally, the researchers identified 35 samples of students in correlational studies, but note that this latter type of study does not lend itself to causal claims. Among these, 27 identified a positive link between homework and achievement. However, while the correlations were strong for secondary students, they were weak for younger students.


In discussions of possible remedies for educational deficits in Western industrialized countries, the issue of homework frequently attracts considerable attention, although there is still a lack of strong empirical support for the homework–achievement relation. In the present study, repeated-measurement data collected from 1,976 German 7th-graders in 125 classes were analyzed to investigate the role of homework in enhancing mathematics achievement. Intelligence, SES, motivation, and type of secondary school were controlled. The frequency of homework assignments had a positive effect on math achievement gains, whereas lengthy homework assignments had a negative, albeit non-significant, effect on achievement gains. However, the effect of homework length interacted significantly with individual achievement level, suggesting that extensive homework assignments tended to reduce intraclass achievement variability. Monitoring of homework completion did not contribute significantly to achievement gains. Methodological implications for homework research are discussed.


Available at: [http://ldx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/22/5/314](http://ldx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/22/5/314)

This quasi-experimental design study examined the effectiveness of supplemental homework (HW) assignments on the acquisition of basic skills by 10 elementary-level students (aged 8 yrs to 10 yrs) with learning disabilities. In Experiment 1, unknown mathematics facts were assigned to two experimental conditions: direct instruction (DI) and DI with supplemental HW. In Experiment 2, spelling performance was measured, using the 2 experimental conditions. Results indicate that HW, when planned, assigned, and implemented in a structured manner, was successful in maximizing the effectiveness of DI sequences with students. Three factors increased the effectiveness of the HW assignment: rate of HW completion, percentage correct on the HW assignments, and rate of acquisition of content being presented.
Additional Resources


Homework: What the research says. Available at: