

Did You Know? Homework and Gifted Kids

Courtesy of NAGC Research and Evaluation Division

The Homework Experience: Perceptions of Low-Income Youth

Homework is a universal component of the educational experience in the lives of students in the United States.

Bempechat, et al. conducted a qualitative study of the perceptions 92 ethnically diverse, low- and high-achieving, low-income students had toward homework experiences and what impact, if any, did these have experiences had on their learning and the implications of these perceptions for the field of education. “Despite very different beliefs about and approaches to homework, both higher and lower achievers signaled their need for support in their learning” (p. 271). The researchers call on teachers to maintain high expectations for all of their students, emphasizing the importance of academic and motivational support.

Developing Self-Regulation Skills: The Important Role of Homework

Time spent on homework is not nearly as important as factors such as learned self-regulation, goal setting, and time management skills.

Ramdass and Zimmerman reviewed a wide range of published studies and found that the benefits of homework, above and beyond potential practice with the content being learned, include practice in self-regulation. This practice occurs in homework in elementary school all the way through college and is an important factor in student success in a wide range of academic and professional pursuits.

Costs and Benefits of Family Involvement in Homework

A combination of professional development and homework specifically designed to foster interaction with family partners shows positive effects on attitude, interaction, and achievement in students.

After two years of implementation, Van Voorhis used ANOVA and linear regression to isolate the effect of the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) program. A randomized sample of teachers in nine elementary and middle schools (575 students) was trained to adapt or develop homework exercises encouraging cooperation with a family partner. These exercises were delivered once per week, while control teachers used traditional assignments.

After controlling for a number of student differences, Van Voorhis found that while students with TIPS teacher spent roughly the same amount of time doing homework, both students and families exhibited more positive feelings toward homework. Students indicated both a higher quality of interaction and a higher level of involvement with the family partner. Furthermore, student achievement on standardized measures increased with two years of TIPS participation. These effects were less profound for students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and they increased with teacher experience.

The author suggests that while family partners should not be expected to teach material, homework designed with clear guidelines for family interaction can produce both affective and achievement benefits.

Effects of Beliefs and Homework on Mathematics Achievement

Mathematics homework positively affects achievement when students’ self-efficacy is adequate and homework support resources for quiet, purposeful study are provided.

Kitsantas, Cheema, and Ware found that female students and African American students grow in self-efficacy when they experience mathematical mastery in the context of social interaction. White males grow in self-efficacy when they experience mathematical mastery in the context of vicarious experiences. Students, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, also benefit from access to homework support resources needed for quiet study, such as a room in which to study, access to a computer, and school supplies. Further, mathematics achievement is enhanced by frequency of homework, not length of time spent doing it. This finding highlights the need for efficient use of resources as students study. Accordingly, the authors recommend completion of homework in class to maximize use of helpful resources.

The authors note that adults, such as parents and mentors, can assist students, not by mastering mathematics themselves, but by providing the psychological and material resources that support achievement: belief in one’s ability to successfully do mathematical work and a quiet environment with adequate material resources.

References

All references are from the Winter 2011 special issue of *the Journal of Advanced Academics* focused on the topic of homework.

Bempechat, J., Li, J., Neier, S. M., Gillis, C. A., & Holloway, S. D. (2011). The homework experience: Perceptions of low-income youth. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22 (2), 250-278.

Kitsantas, A., Cheema, J., & Ware, H. W. (2011). Mathematics achievement: The role of homework and self-efficacy beliefs. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22, 310-339.

Ramdass, D., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2011). Developing self-regulation skills: The important role of homework. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22, 194-218.

Van Voorhis, F. L. (2011). Costs and benefits of family involvement in homework. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22, 220-249.