

How Having Less Homework Can Help Improve Learning

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According to a survey conducted by the University of Phoenix College of Education, American high school students are assigned about 17.5 hours of homework per week (Bidwell, 2014). That is an increase from the average of 6.8 from the year prior as reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics (Ryan, 2013). However, does this shift really enhance education for students? Unfortunately for our school systems' emerging around-the-clock teaching strategy, loading adolescents with enough homework to fill half a school day each night only reverses the intent. High school is a critical component to the development of well-rounded adults. Not only would less homework help students avoid excess stress and corresponding health issues but would also allow them to participate in healthy stimulating activities.

First, less homework would benefit students' learning capacity by allowing them to avoid excess stress which can lead to health issues. The major cause of stress in teens and a side effect of the current homework overload is sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation occurs in teenagers when they get less than the recommended 9-10 hours of sleep a night, yielding many negative health outcomes ("How Much Sleep Do I Need?", 2015). Many students report experiencing headaches, exhaustion, weight loss and stomach problems often accredited to their school-related workload outside of class (Parker, 2014). This physical strain, if not directly hindering a student's ability to learn, only discourages them from pursuing their education to the best of their ability. Thus, decreasing the amount of homework would drastically boost the teens' learning potential while at the same time making the learning experience much more comfortable.

Less homework also would benefit students' learning by allowing them to participate in healthy stimulating activities. The time and energy that would have been dedicated toward homework could be redirected toward after school activities and family time. First, after school

activities would provide an enjoyable, cooperative atmosphere which has shown to have a positive effect on both confidence and health in students. These encounters with other students also would provide opportunities of learning “real life” social skills extremely valuable for success in the future. People isolated from the rest of the world doing homework at 2am cannot learn these essential skills. Finally, family time, with similar advantages, allows teens to view their dining table as a place to sit and bond with their family over a meal versus a place to solve 40 math problems each night. All of these healthy alternatives accessed through less homework would allow students to not only be more open to learning and social experience but also open the right state of mind for them to do so more effectively.

Overall, the American school system needs to know when school ends and supper begins. Assigning enough homework to fill half of a school day every night is not serving its intended purpose of enhancing learning and could be interpreted as detrimental to it. Because it helps students avoid excess stress and allows them to participate in stimulating activities, assigning less homework is essential to increasing the health and learning of the future well-rounded adults in our nation. If the intent of the system is to develop well-rounded educated individual equipped to deal with the “real world”, assigning 3.5 hours of homework every night is not the answer. Lessen the stress; lessen the health issues; encourage group and family activities while allowing their minds to develop at a more leisurely and comfortable rate. After all, these are the minds and the personalities that will determine our future.

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