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The Opinions of Parents and Teachers of Children in Grades K-6 in the Francis Howell School District Regarding Homework

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THE OPINIONS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS OF CHILDREN IN GRADES K-6 IN THE FRANCIS HOWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT REGARDING HOMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey parents and teachers of children in kindergarten through sixth grade in the Francis Howell School District to determine opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. It was also designed to determine their awareness of district homework policy.

All data in the study were gathered by means of a printed questionnaire, which was developed so it could be answered by both parents and teachers. Two hundred participants (150 parents and 50 teachers) were randomly chosen to be part of the study. The questionnaires, along with cover letters and return envelopes, were mailed to all the participants. Follow-up letters, second questionnaires, and return envelopes were sent after two weeks to those who did not initially respond. One hundred nineteen parents (79%) and 46 teachers (92%) returned completed surveys.

It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the statement that homework is a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. This hypothesis was not rejected. It was also hypothesized that there would be significant differences between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the reasons for homework being valuable,

the subjects in which homework was most valuable, and the reasons for homework not being valuable. These hypotheses were rejected.

Analysis of the data revealed that less than one-fourth of the parents and just over half of the teachers were aware of what the district's homework policy stated. It also revealed there was strong agreement between parents and teachers regarding the value of homework in the elementary school, who should plan the homework assignments, whether or not homework should be assigned on weekends, holidays, or as punishment, the time that should be devoted to homework in kindergarten through fifth grade, and the reasons homework was not valuable in the in the elementary school. There was general agreement between parents and teachers regarding the reasons homework was valuable in the elementary school and the subjects in which homework was most valuable. There was mild disagreement between parents and teachers regarding the type of homework that should be assigned, how often homework should be assigned, the grade level in which homework should begin, and how much time should be devoted to homework in sixth grade. There was strong disagreement between parents and teachers regarding whether or not homework should be used in determining report card grades.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1981, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was created by T. H. Bell, United States Secretary of Education, to study and report on the quality of education in America. The report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, was final in April, 1983. The opening paragraph states:

> Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur--others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (p. 5)

More specific findings were included later in the report. One of these was that American students spend less time on homework compared to other nations. The Commission also pointed out that time spent in the classroom and on homework was often used ineffectively.

They also reported that schools were not doing enough to help students develop either the study skills required to use time well or the willingness to spend more time on school work. These findings, along with recommendations later in the report indicated more homework should be assigned in our nation's high schools.

As a result of the Commission's report, discussions and debates began over a topic which had been studied since the turn of the century--homework. What are the advantages of homework? What are the disadvantages? If there is to be homework, how much should be given, and at what level should it begin?

Statement of the Problem

School districts began looking at the question of homework, more at the elementary level, due to pressure to increase homework and begin it at an earlier age. Research has been somewhat divergent as to the effect of homework on achievement. Some studies resulted in outcomes which ranged from mild achievement increases to very high achievement improvements. Hines (1957) conducted a yearlong experiment to determine the effect of homework on achievement in geometry classes. The results of his study showed that the scores on every test given during the year favored the homework group, the differences between the two groups were greater on cumulative tests than on chapter tests covering

more recent materials, and if students were graded on tests only, homework increased the grade of the average student by one letter grade. Other studies have shown little or no achievement improvement as a result of homework tasks and have been concluded by the researchers not to be worthwhile considering the amount of time involved for both the teacher and students. Gray and Allison (1971) investigated the effect of homework on the achievement of sixth grade students in the study of fractions. The results indicated there was no statistical difference between the two groups in computation skills or understanding of the subject matter.

According to Knorr (1981), despite changing views, homework has been accepted and expected as part of American schooling. Friesen (1979) summarized twenty-four studies conducted between 1923 and 1976 and included both elementary and secondary schools. The results analyzed provide neither supporting nor refuting evidence regarding the effects of homework on learning. Also in 1979, Harding reviewed research from 1900 to 1979 and was unable to find clear evidence regarding the effectiveness of homework in improving pupil performance. Knorr also suggested there was no common definition of homework nor agreement on taxonomy, constructs, or classifications by which to carry out research

on homework, so educators were forced to make decisions regarding its use without the help of a sound research base.

As well as studies, many surveys regarding homework have been conducted over the years. There did not seem to be any common result because they each asked a different set of questions.

Even though the results of research studies and surveys were somewhat inconclusive, educators and administrators were being asked to make decisions and develop homeowrk policies. Kinion (1982) examined school districts in the St. Louis area and found that not all districts had a written policy for the elementary grades. Some had unwritten policies, and some had very general policies consisting of a few words. She concluded that a school district should have a written policy and should establish this policy on a sound basis of research, education, and community imput. She also concluded that the district should publicize the policy, evaluate its effects, and make revisions when necessary. She developed and field tested a survey for administrators, teachers, parents, and students based on examples from Savage (1966) and Burchfiels (1966).

Purpose

After looking carefully at research findings, survey results, and analyses by other researchers, it appeared that a broad statement concerning homework could not be made applicable to all school districts. Each school district needed to determine the attitudes of the community within that school district to determine if a homework policy should be written, and if so, what should be stated in that policy (Knorr, 1981; Kinion, 1982). The purpose of this study was to survey the parents and teachers of children in kindergarten through sixth grade in the Francis Howell School District based on surveys developed by Savage in 1966 and Kinion in 1982 to determine two things: awareness of district homework policy and the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school.

The Francis Howell School District did, in 1988, have a written homework policy for the elementary grades with general guidelines for the teacher. (See Appendix A for the FHSD homework policy). There was increasing pressure from some parents and educators to develop more stringent homework guidelines. This study was designed to give the district an indication of the parents' and teachers' opinions about homework.

In 1988, the Francis Howell School District had

a kindergarten through twelfth grade enrollment of approximately 12,000 students. A survey of the district was done by random sampling. One-hundred-fifty parents and 50 teachers of children in kindergarten through sixth grade were sent questionnaires. The questionnaire, based on ones developed by Savage (1966) and Kinion (1982), was mailed to the participants. Follow-up letters were mailed to those participants who did not initially respond to the survey. Choosing to study this problem in the local area was consistent with the belief that homework policies must be developed on the basis of sound local research (Knorr, 1981).

Hypotheses to be Tested

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. Four hypotheses were made before the survey was conducted:

1. There will be no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the statement that homework is a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children.

2. There will be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of the responses regarding the reasons they consider homework valuable in the elementary school.

3. There will be a significant difference between

the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the subjects in which homework is most valuable.

4. There will be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the reasons homework is not considered valuable in the elementary school.

Summary

There has long been controversy over the issue of homework. Research has not been able to give any conclusive answers as to the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of homework. The research questions in this survey addressed awareness of district homework policies and the opinions of parents and teachers concerning the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. This study was designed to give the Francis Howell School District and other school districts of similar make up, a clear picture of the attitudes of parents and teachers towards homework in the elementary grades.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Trends

Homework has long been a controversial issue in education. Knorr, in 1981, reported that over 500 articles on homework had been indexed since 1900. Because of inconclusive research studies throughout the years, homework has gone in and out of fashion as the educational trends of the country have changed.

In the first part of this century, a widely accepted theory of learning presented the mind as a big muscle that needed development. Memorization was used in schools, and homework was considered important. Even though this theory prevailed, articles in Ladies Home Journal and School Review (now the American Journal of Education) appeared around 1910 opposing homework on the grounds it was not supervised professionally, and that it forced children to carry home their books and practice mistakes (Walberg, Paschal, & Weinstein, 1985).

In the 1920s, homework ideas were becoming more and more based on the ideas of theorists Pestalozzi and Herbart, and student interest was considered an

important factor. In an article in the Elementary School Journal in 1926, Good states:

> There should be no compulsary home tasks assigned in the lower grades, and there may be serious doubts as to the wisdom of requiring homework in any of the grades of the elementary school . . . the reasonable plan being to have such work done voluntarily, following the inclination of the child. (Check, 1966, p. 143)

In the 1940s and early 1950s, educators continued to show less concern about homework and put more emphasis on extracurricular activities. Following World War II and the Korean War, afterschool time was devoted more frequently to clubs, youth organizations, and sports (England and Flatley, 1985).

However, the launching of Sputnik in 1957 changed America's views on homework. There was a trend toward more subject matter emphasis in homework. Colleges and universities were raising entrance standards and the big push for academic excellence was started. Homework was considered a means to that end (Check, 1966). This "more homework" trend continued into the midsixties. Then the effects of this pressure on students began to be studied. Administrators, teachers, and parents still favored homework, but they began to question the amount and type of homework given. Guided study in school was viewed as a good alternative to homework. The American Educational Research Association made the following statement

concerning homework:

> For mental health, children and young people need to engage in worthwhile out of school tasks suited to their individual capacities. Homework should supply such tasks and reasonable freedom in carrying them out. Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents. (Wildman, 1968, p. 204)

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the pressure for academic achievement continued to recede. More focus was placed on things like social adjustment and emotional development of students (Knorr, 1981). Then in the late seventies, there came the "back to basics" push started by teachers and parents seeking solutions to declining test scores, poor academic achievement, high illiteracy in the nation's cities, and lowering of standards by educational institutions (Lee & Pruitt, 1979). Further interest in the subject of homework was aroused in 1983 when the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended more homework in our nation's schools.

Since the turn of the century, homework philosophies have come full circle--twice. The trends toward homework have gone from very structured policies, to individualized homework, back to structured policies, then to discontinuance, and finally, to more stringent homework policies. A review of research

throughout this century will be examined in the next section.

Homework Effectiveness

One of the earliest studies found was completed in 1933 by Carmichael and reported by Friesen (1979). In this six year study, Carmichael focused upon the achievement of students in grades 5 through 8 in an El Segundo, California, elementary school. During the first three years, the children were assigned homework, and during the last three years, no homework was assigned. Friesen concluded that although Carmichael's study was limited because he did not equate the groups, the conclusions were noteworthy. A slight difference favoring the homework group was found on a battery of Stanford Achievement Tests.

In a follow-up study in 1937, Carmichael and Crawford found that high school grades dropped among those pupils that attended the El Segundo school after homework was abolished. The researchers concluded that differences in attitudes and habits of work may have been responsible. They also concluded that once home study is done away with, the pupil has difficulty in returning to it.

Teahan (1935) investigated the value of homework in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade arithmetic classes. Three teachers using the same teaching methods were

involved in this 115 day study. Each teacher taught four classes at one grade level. Two of the four classes were assigned homework at least three times a week, while the other two classes received no homework. The Stanford Achievement Test was used as both a pretest and a posttest. Teahan found no significant difference in achievement between the two groups and concluded that homework was of no value in promoting achievement in arithmetic.

While Teahan found that homework did not lead to achievement gains, Steiner (1934) found the opposite result. He examined a seventh grade class in Pennsylvania. Half the pupils had compulsory homework in math but not in English, and the other half had compulsary homework in English grammar but not in math. Each group served as a control group for the other. The pupils in the two groups were matched on mental ability and achievement in English and arithmetic. The test scores at semester's end showed clear gains in arithmetic achievement by the homework group over the no homework group. As far as the English results were concerned, in the general English test, the two groups scored about the same, but in the grammar usage test, the group that had English grammar homework showed greater gains.

A study conducted in Oklahoma (Anderson, 1946)

compared eighth grade achievement gains in English, social studies, and mathematics in classes that did and did not have regular homework assignments. There were 29 students in each group, and they were matched on the basis of mental ability. All classes in each subject were taught by the same teacher. Achievement was tested after each unit of work. The group with regular homework assignments showed higher achievement gains in all three subject areas. Anderson stated that the brighter pupils in the non-homework study group gained almost as much as those in the home study group, but the average and dull students of the non-home study group were much less successful than those in the home study group.

In 1950, still during the time when extracurricular activities were considered more valuable than homework, McGill did an experiment with eleventh and twelfth graders in social studies. There were eight classes in economics and eight in American history and government. Each teacher taught an equal number of classes with and without homework. The experiment lasted two semesters. The criterion of achievement at semester's end was a standardized test in economics and American history. The results showed that in economics, the homework group was superior to the no-homework group in both semesters and in all classes studies. However, in

history and general social studies abilities, there were no differences between the two groups. McGill discounted the economics results, concluding that it made no difference whether or not homework was assigned and done in social studies. He did stress that the study only measured immediate outcomes, and that further study should be done later to determine long term results.

Later in the 1950s a study was done to determine the effects of homework on achievement in two geometry classes (Hines, 1957). The matched pairs were matched on the basis of intelligence, age, and first year algebra grades and then randomly assigned to the two geometry classes. The treatment group received homework two or three times each week, and the control group received no homework. The results showed that the scores on every test given during the year favored the homework group, and the differences between the two groups were greater on cumulative tests than on those tests covering more recent materials. Also, if the students were graded only on tests, homework increased the student's grade by one letter grade. Hines did note some limitations of his study. He said that only 16 of the original 19 pairs were able to be used in the final results. Also, each group was taught by a different teacher, and some

of the differences could have been accounted for by differences in skill and zeal on the part of the two teachers involved. Note, however, that this study was done in 1957, the same year as Sputnik was launched. At this time educators were looking for support for tougher educational standards, and Hines's study certainly accomplished this.

In 1965, during the time when the detrimental effects of homework were being studied, Koch reported an experiment with sixth grade students. The purpose was to study whether daily practice at home, in addition to class lessons, would increase arithmetic achievement, and whether a long daily assignment (30 minutes) or a shorter one (15 minutes) would have more influence on achievement for these students. Eighty-five students were assigned to one of three classes, each taught by a different teacher. Prior to the 10 week study, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills--Form 1 was administered and revealed that the classes did not differ significantly. During the study, one class received the long assignment, one class received the short assignment, and the third received no assignment. When Form 2 of the ITBS was given after the 10 week study, Koch's statistical analysis revealed that daily homework assignments were a significant factor in raising the achievement level

in arithmetic computation, but not in the area of problem solving. His results showed that the 30 minute homework group had a more significant gain than the 15 minute group, and the 15 minute group gained more than the no-homework group.

Gray and Allison (1971) studied the effects of homework with sixth grade students in the study of the four fundamental operations with fractions. Fifty-five students were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups. The first treatment group received classroom instruction with no assignment. The second treatment group received instruction and three 20 minute homework assignments per week. At the end of four weeks, the treatments were reversed. Pretests and posttests were given at the beginning and end of each four week period. The results indicated that there was no statistical difference between the two groups in computation skills or the understanding of subject matter. The researchers did conclude, however, that perhaps five-day-a-week homework should have been assigned instead of just three days a week, and should have been a constant number of exercises rather than the constant twenty minutes of homework.

Although Gray and Allison found no significant difference in achievement in their study, Parrish

(1976) found different results. He studied the effects of homework on achievement and attitude toward mathematics. In this study, two teachers each taught four classes of Fundamentals of Mathematics. Two classes from each teacher were randomly selected for the drill homework group. The other two classes from each teacher received no homework. In his analysis, Parrish concluded that the drill homework group achieved at a significantly higher level than those in the no-homework group. However, he found no difference in attitude toward math in the two groups.

In 1984, Bloom researched ways in which group instruction could be as effective as one-to-one tutoring, and found that mastery learning in combination with other practical methods of instruction will enable students to learn almost as well as with the tutoring. One of these methods that improved achievement was homework that is graded. Although graded homework was not the highest rated variable, it ranked better than half of the variables examined by Bloom. Bloom stated in reference to ways in which the home environment can influence school learning:

> Schoolwork and reading should be done, ideally, before play, TV, or even other work. A sufficient amount of time needs to be given to schoolwork, reading, and other educational activities,

> even if it reduces the time for play, TV, or other recreational activities. (1981, p. 95)

In 1979, Lee and Pruitt developed a taxonomy of homework practices to give teachers some guidelines for assigning homework. The taxonomy is summarized below:

1. Practice--given to help students master specific skills and should be limited to material presented in class.

2. Preparation--given to prepare students to gain maximum benefit from subsequent lessons.

3. Extension--given to determine if students can transfer a new skill or concept to a new situation.

4. Creative--given to require students to integrate many skills and concepts in the process of producing a response.

Foyle (1985) used Lee and Pruitt's taxonomy and conducted a study examining the effectiveness of practice and preparation homework on achievement of tenth grade social studies students. There were 131 students in three homework groups. Identical reading and writing homework was assigned either as preparation or practice for two of the groups. The third group received no homework. No class time was allowed for homework. Foyle concluded from his study that both practice and preparation homework raised students' achievement as compared

to students who were not assigned homework.

Through the decades, many studies have been conducted to try to determine the effectiveness of homework on achievement. There seemed to be inconclusive results from these individual studies. Some showed significant differences in the homework groups compared to the no-homework groups, and some could find no significant differences. Other researchers have also identified this problem and have analyzed many studies to try to reach some conclusions about the homework issue. These studies will be reviewed in the next section.

Reviews of Research

One of the earliest syntheses of research was done by Goldstein in 1960. In examining the research done in the 30 years prior to 1958, he found that of the 280 titles listed in the Educational Index before 1958, only 17 proved to be original reports of experimental research. None of the 17 pertained to grades 1 through 4, 7 concerned grades 5 and 6, and the rest dealt with junior and senior high school. Goldstein drew several conclusions from his study. One was that though some of the experiments found that homework did not affect achievement, there were flaws in the designs of the studies that limited the validity of those studies. He said that the best designed experiments showed quite

clearly that regularly assigned homework favored higher academic achievement. He also stated that homework may be more important at some grade levels than at others, in some subjects than in others, and for some pupils than for others. He also concluded that statements about long term effects of homework on study skills could not be made at that time because not enough of those types of studies had been done to draw valid conclusions. Finally, at that time, Goldstein concluded that no statement whatsoever could be made about the value of homework in grades 1 through 4 since no research studies had dealt with those grades.

Goldstein recommended reinstatement of homework as a valued educational procedure in the elementary school. The reason for his recommendation was that mastery of study skills must take place in the earlier grades in order to handle the homework load in the junior and senior high schools. He did recommend that the homework program should be smoothly graduated, from perhaps five minutes in the first grade to two or three hours in high school.

Friesen (1979) reviewed research from 1923 to 1976 in elementary school and secondary school. Some of this research was the same as that which Goldstein had reviewed, but Friesen found different results. From his study, he was not able to provide a clear-cut

endorsement for either homework or no-homework. He said that while schools have historically endorsed the assigning of homework, there had been little data supporting or refuting its worth as a means of improving performance. He suggested that each teacher should determine which of the two methods to use in order to maximize student achievement.

In 1981, Knorr examined research studies from 1964 to 1981. She was unable to draw any conclusions from the surveys because each tended to ask different questions. She also concluded that empirical research on the relationship of homework to achievement was inconclusive. Because of the inconclusive evidence that she found, Knorr made the following recommendations:

> If local communities value homework, they need to explore why . . . . Assumptions made at the local level about the value of homework should be tested at the local level . . . . Local homework policies should be developed and modified on a sound base of local research. (1981, p. 47)

Also in 1981, LaConte reviewed much of the same research as those previously mentioned and concluded that there was no conclusive evidence that homework is very effective. He also thought there was enough negative research to raise strong doubts about its effectiveness. He concluded that homework for young (although he does not define young) children was not only inappropriate, but may be counterproductive. He did conclude that higher achieving students showed

some tendency to improve performance in mathematics when they were part of a program that included mandatory homework. Research, LaConte concluded, did not support that this improvement had been found in other subjects. He stated, "Required exercises, whether practice or preparation, are best accomplished in class under teacher supervision. Homework is best reserved for assignments that extend classwork and increase student interest and motivation" (1981, p. 19).

Paschal, Weinstein, and Walberg (1984) conducted a review of research between 1966 and 1981. Using an ERIC search, 15 studies were found that provided sufficient statistics for a quantitative synthesis. Eight of these were documents or articles, and seven were dissertations. The results of this review contradicted LaConte's study. They found that the published journal articles had a higher mean effect size than documents and dissertations, which, according to the authors, suggested publication bias. They also found that homework effects were greater for fourth and fifth grade students. They found that larger effects on achievement were found for homework that bore teachers' comments and grades, assigned homework produced more learning than no homework, and traditional homework was superior to non-traditional. Finally, they found that daily homework assignments were superior to just

periodic assignments. Of all the studies they examined, 85% of the effect sizes favored the homework groups.

Even these five researchers that reviewed years of research were unable to agree in their conclusions. Goldstein (1960) and Paschal et al. (1984) found homework to be beneficial, Friesen (1979) and Knorr (1981) found inconclusive results, and LaConte (1981) found negative results of homework.

Because of the inconsistency of these results, surveys have often been used to develop homework policies. A representation of these surveys will be examined in the next section.

Surveys

One of the surveys found was conducted by Bond and Smith (1966). They surveyed 116 school districts in the Hudson River Valley of New York state concerning the following areas: development of written policies, distribution of homework, parental reactions, goals and procedures, and amount of homework. There was a 66% response to their surveys. Their conclusions are summarized as follows:

1. Twenty-seven percent of the school districts had a written policy, 29% had no policy, and 44% had an unwritten policy. The authors concluded that three-fourths of the districts reporting had not established specific procedures.

2. More districts had policies because of suggestions from administration than from teachers, boards of education, or lay citizen groups.

3. There seemed to be lack of communication regarding homework policy. Only slightly more than one half of the teachers were given copies and less than one fourth of the parents received copies. Only 14% of the students were aware of the policy.

4. Social studies, math, science, and spelling were the subjects in which homework was most frequently assigned.

5. Overnight assignments were the most common (50%) type of assignment given. Weekly assignments (3%), several days long assignments (21%), and more than a week assignments (25%) were much less frequent. Only 1% of the districts reporting used a combination of the above patterns.

6. Parental pressure to give more, earlier, and longer assignments was generally felt by the school districts responding to the survey.

7. Only one third of the districts reported that teachers systematically corrected, graded, and returned homework to the students. Also, more than 50% of the districts gave assignments in which every child in the class received the same assignment.

8. In more than 90% of the districts that had

a formal homework policy, homework for children began by grade 4.

Savage (1966) conducted a study in New England surveying 58 superintendents, 90 principals, 94 teachers, 1480 parents, and 2692 children. More than 86% of the parents and children surveyed favored nightly homework, and more than 80% of teachers, principals, and superintendents supported long-range homework. Parents, educators, and students all tended to agree on the value of homework, but for different reasons. Savage stated:

> Homework is sanctioned and promoted in school because it is supposed to help pupils become independent in work and study habits. Teachers give homework to provide practice for skills learned at school. Parents supervise it because they believe homework builds character and self-discipline in their children. Pupils do it because they're convinced it will help them pass tomorrow's test. When this divergency exists, certainly something is lost between the theory of homework and the completion of the assignment. (1969, p. 26)

Other results of Savage's survey indicated that parents differed in their attitudes toward helping children with homework. Some welcomed the responsibility while others did not. However, all parents urged moderation in the amount of homework given.

When Savage listed 13 possible reasons for homework's value, parents and educators both chose "develops children's initiative and responsibility"

as most important. Both groups also chose "develops research skills" as their number three reason. However, there was no agreement between parents and educators on any other point.

Check, in 1966, administered 1016 questionnaires to elementary school students, junior high students, senior high students, parents of those levels, teachers of those levels, professors from the University of Michigan, Flint College, and education majors who at that time were taking educational psychology or educational sociology. The schools were both public and parochial from both a predominantly professional area and a more restricted cultural environment. Check received almost a 100% response. He found that 80% of elementary, junior high, and senior high students felt that homework assignments were necessary, but half of them wanted to reserve the right to question the type of assignment given. Of the negative student responses to homework, the highest ratio came from children in the professional home. However, only one professional parent was against homework. Only 7 of the 205 parents that responded rejected any form of homework, but about one-half of them questioned the nature and amount of homework to be given. Of the 90 teachers that answered the questionnaire, only one desired no homework at all. Similarly, professors

and education majors were in favor of homework assignments.

Gallup (1986) found interesting results in "The 18th Annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes toward the Public Schools." For two decades, the public has believed that children in elementary and high school did not work hard enough. They have felt that students should be given more homework, and the majority of parents said they required their children to spend time on homework on school nights. However, when asked in the poll how much time they spent assisting their children with homework, one third of the parents said they didn't spend any time helping their children, and the average spent about one and one half hours per week. According to the author, this compared somewhat unfavorably with the one and one half hours per day they required from their children.

As Knorr (1981) concluded regarding surveys, they were difficult to evaluate because each one asked a different set of questions. Also, in reviewing the large amount of literature, many advantages and disadvantages of homework were cited by the authors. These advantages and disadvantages will be summarized in the next section because it is important to understand these points, since research studies and surveys have been found to be so inconclusive.

Advantages of Homework

1. The amount of work required by curriculum cannot be imparted during the school hours alone.

2. It teaches children how to follow directions and helps them learn how to organize their time.

3. Struggling with lessons is good discipline and a builder of character.

4. Homework keeps parents in touch with the school program and their child's progress, so it creates a closer tie between home and school.

5. It reinforces school learnings and gives needed drill on lessons learned in class.

6. It teaches the child to accept responsibility and helps him develop self-reliance in his work.

7. It improves study skills and work habits.

8. Homework provides constructive use of time which might otherwise be wasted.

9. It furthers learning and achievement through reinforcement, practice, application, and enrichment of what is learned in school.

10. It allows for the completion of unfinished work and make-up work.

11. It fosters an appreciation for school and learning.

12. It relates school learning to problems in the home, community, and nation.

13. Homework provides a preview of classroom work.

14. It supports the school experience.

15. It utilizes the sense of civic responsibility.

16. It develops early habits of devoting one's home life to intellectual activity.

17. Homework can be a rewarding experience.

18. It helps the slow student.

19. It provides for self-analysis.

20. Parent involvement is necessary for the gifted.

Disadvantages of Homework

1. After a six or seven hour day, a child is tired, and it is too much to expect him to do homework.

2. It keeps the children from getting needed physical exercise.

3. The extra work may reduce the interest and vigor with which the child faces the next day's work.

4. Parents are not always qualified to supervise and may just confuse the child.

5. Homes do not always provide suitable study conditions or facilities.

6. Other educational activities my be neglected if a child has to do homework (ex: scout meetings, music lessons, hobbies, church activities, recreational reading, educational TV programs, and play).

7. Disagreeable tasks are too often assigned for homework instead of creative, interesting assignments.

8. The harmony of family life may be jeopardized with too much homework.

9. Homework can cause anxiety in children.

10. Homework is often a meaningless task because it is not geared to the individual needs of the child.

11. It makes students less enthusiastic about school and learning tasks.

12. Parents often end up doing the assignments instead of the children.

13. Homework is often geared to the average student.

14. Assignments are often poorly chosen and assigned.

15. Excessive desk work or reading can cause eye strain or cramped lungs.

16. Homework may lead to copying.

17. Teaching should be done in school, not sent home.

18. Often homework is not graded.

19. Teachers sometimes use homework as punishment.

20. Homework creates more work for the teacher.

21. In schools where homework has been discontinued, achievement has not been affected.

Summary

Historically, homework has gone in and out of favor with the educational mood of the country. Research studies, while not showing that homework is detrimental,

have not given conclusive evidence that it is an effective way to lead to higher achievement either. Surveys have shown that teachers and parents generally favor homework, but these surveys have not been much help other than that because each tended to ask a different set of questions. Finally, as many arguments can be found against homework as an educational tool as can be found for it.

As Knorr (1981) said, "It is the opinion of this writer that the proper place for meaningful homework research is within the school and local district" (p. 47). In the next chapter, the methodology for conducting a local survey of parents and teachers of elementary students will be explained.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to survey parents and teachers of children in kindergarten through sixth grade in the Francis Howell School District to determine opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. It was also designed to determine their awareness of district homework policy.

The study was conducted to give Francis Howell and other school districts of similar characteristics, data from parents and teachers regarding homework in the elementary school. It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the statement that homework is a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. It was also hypothesized that there would be significant differences between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the reasons for homework being valuable, the subjects in which homework was most valuable, and the reasons for homework not being valuable.

The methodology for conducting this study will be explained in the following sections.

Construction and Refinement of Questionnaire

All data in the study were gathered by means of a printed questionnaire. Early drafts of the form were reviewed by educators at Lindenwood College. The survey form was developed so it could be answered by both the parents and teachers. It was approved by Francis Howell School District authorities and cosigned by Dr. Richard Schuppan, assistant superintendent.

The questionnaire was administered to a trial group to check for clarity, ease of completion, and to determine the time needed for completion. It was found that the form could be completed in less than eight minutes. All items could be answered either by circling a response or by placing a checkmark in a designated blank.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire's form and content (Appendix B) were based on surveys developed by Savage (1966) and Kinion (1982). It was organized to provide information in the two areas set forth in the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was divided into four sections.

In the first part of the questionnaire, two items were written to assess awareness of district homework policy:

1. <u>Do you know if your school district has a</u>

homework policy?

If so,

2. Do you know what your district's homework policy states?

These questions were modeled from the work of Kinion (1982). Inclusion of these items was also supported by the work of Bond and Smith (1966) who found that less than half of the teachers surveyed and less than a fourth of the parents were aware of their districts' homework policies. Based on these findings, it seemed desirable to assess awareness of policy in this district.

The third question was designed to determine whether or not the respondents considered homework valuable:

3. Do you consider homework to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children?

Knorr (1981) examined research studies and surveys from 1964 to 1981. Inconclusive results were found, and she recommended that local communities be examined to see if they value homework, and if so, why. The work of Knorr provided the basis for item three, as did the work of Savage, who designed a similar question for his survey in 1966.

Part one of the survey assessed parents' and teachers' awareness of district homework policy and

whether or not they valued homework. Participants were then directed to complete parts two and three if they answered the third question of part one affirmatively, or to complete part four if their answer was negative.

Part two was concerned with the reasons why the respondents considered homework valuable. Knorr's research (1981) supported inclusion of this section of the questionnaire. If participants valued homework, it was important to ascertain why.

In the review of research, 20 advantages of homework were found. Because including all 20 reasons would tend to make the questionnaire too lengthy, the list was reduced to the 11 more commonly stated reasons:

1. It extends the school day so more learning can take place.
2. It helps students do better on exams.
3. It provides practice for skills learned at school.
4. It keeps children from wasting time at night.
5. It prepares students for high school.
6. It develops organizational skills.
7. It develops research skills.
8. It improves study skills and work habits.
9. It builds character and self-discipline.
10. It develops responsibility.

11. It fosters an appreciation for school and learning.

To prevent participants from checking all 11 reasons for valuing homework, respondents were asked to check the five reasons they believed were most important.

Like part two, part three was to be completed by the participants only if they thought homework was a valuable teaching-learning tool for elementary children. This section dealt with the scope of homework: the subjects best suited for homework, who should plan the assignments, the types of homework to be assigned, how often it should be assigned, when it should be assigned, how it should be used, when homework should begin, and how much time should be spent on homework. The items in this section were not based on other research experiments, but rather modeled on surveys developed by other researchers to obtain a description of what the participants thought would be a favorable homework plan for elementary children.

The first item of this section was written to assess the subject in which participants thought homework was most valuable:

1.	social studies	6.	science
2.	handwriting	7.	health
3.	spelling	8.	math
4.	reading	9.	art
5.	music	10.	English

This item was modeled on similar questions developed by Savage (1966) and Kinion (1982), but modified to allow only one choice. As with part two of the questionnaire, this was done to prevent participants from checking all of the choices.

The second item was written to assess who the participants thought should plan homework assignments:

2. For homework to be most effective, who do you think should plan the assignment?

____ teacher ____ pupils ____ both teacher and pupils

This item was modeled after an item developed by Savage (1966).

Item three dealt with the types of homework considered valuable. Seven categories were set up: three to provide for choices of regular written assignments, regular reading assignments, or long range assignments. Four additional categories were written to provide for combinations of the first three. Respondents were asked to choose one of the categories. This item was also modeled on a question developed by Savage (1966).

One item was included to assess how often homework should be assigned:

4. How many nights per week should homework be assigned?

Participants were asked to check one answer from choices of one to five nights. This item was not modeled on

any questionnaire item used for previous research. It was devised to answer a logical question when developing a homework policy: How often should homework be assigned?

Two items were concerned with when homework should be assigned:

5. Should homework be assigned on weekends or holidays?

6. Should homework be assigned as punishment?

Respondents were asked to check yes or no. Both of these questions were modeled on questions developed by Kinion (1982) and included because, like question four, the answers would give specific data regarding the scope of homework in the elementary school.

One item was concerned with how homework should be used:

7. Should homework be used to determine report card grades?

This item was also modeled after an item developed by Kinion in 1982. Inclusion of this item was also supported by the work of Bond and Smith (1966) who found that although homework was viewed as an instructional device, only three percent of the districts surveyed required teachers to use results of homework when determining report card grades.

The last item in this section of the questionnaire,

number eight, was divided into two parts. The first part was written to assess opinions of an appropriate beginning level for homework. Respondents were asked to circle one grade level, from kindergarten to sixth, in which they thought homework should begin. As a second part to this question, participants were asked to check how much time should be spent on homework, beginning with the grade level they circled for 8a. The time frame choices for 8b were: 0-10 minutes, 10-20 minutes, 20-30 minutes, 30-45 minutes, 45-60 minutes, and 60-up minutes. This item was modeled on items developed by Savage (1966) and Kinion (1982).

Part four of the questionnaire was to be completed only by those participants who did not value homework as a teaching-learning tool for elementary children. It was similar to part two in that it obtained the reasons participants did not value homework in the elementary school. Knorr (1981) recommended that local school districts examine their local communities to see if they value homework and, if so, why. It seemed reasonable, then, to also examine why some respondents do not value homework in the elementary school. The development of this section of the questionnaire was also based on the work of Savage (1966). In the review of research, 21 disadvantages of homework were found. As in part two, including all 21 reasons would have

made the questionnaire too lengthy, so the list was reduced to the 12 more commonly stated reasons:

1. The school day is long enough already.
2. It takes away from needed leisure activity.
3. It is often a form of punishment.
4. It really doesn't help children learn more.
5. It is often not corrected by teachers.
6. It disrupts family life.
7. Teaching should be done in school, not sent home.
8. It is often copied by children.
9. Parents are not always qualified to help.
10. It causes anxiety in children.
11. It reduces children's interest in school.
12. Since all children are often given the same assignment, it does not meet the individual needs of children.

As with part two, to prevent respondents from choosing all 12 reasons, they were asked to check the five reasons they thought were most important.

Distribution of Questionnaires

All distribution and return of the parents' forms were done by mail. Included with the questionnaires was a cover letter stating the nature and purpose of the study and instructions for completing and returning the survey. Also included was an addressed, stamped

envelope for the questionnaire's return.

Distribution of the teachers' forms was done through the interschool mail. A cover letter was included with the teachers' forms also, and an addressed envelope was included for the questionnaire's return through the interschool mail.

A total of 200 questionnaires was sent to the participants; 150 to parents and 50 to teachers. Follow-up letters were sent after two weeks to those who did not initially respond. A second questionnaire and return envelope were also sent with the follow-up letters.

Copies of the letters to participants are in Appendix C.

Population Surveyed

The population for this study was drawn from the Francis Howell School District elementary teachers and parents. The school district is located west of St. Louis, Missouri, in St. Charles County. It is located in a rural area but is suburban in nature. Few farm families have children in school compared with parents who work in other occupations in St. Charles and St. Louis counties.

In 1988, the school district had an enrollment of approximately 12,000 students. There were two high schools, two junior high schools, and seven elementary

schools in the district. The enrollment was 97% Caucasian, and no minority exceeded 1% of the population. Sixty-five percent of the parents had high school diplomas, and 15% had college degrees.

The subjects were the parents and teachers of children from kindergarten through sixth grade in the school district. Participants were randomly chosen to be part of the study. For the parent participants, a list of children enrolled in grades K-6 was obtained, and each child was assigned a number. A random number generator (computer program) was used to select 150 children's names whose parents were to receive surveys. Similarly, a list of all K-6 classroom teachers was obtained, and each teacher was assigned a number. The random number generator was used to select 50 teachers to whom surveys were to be sent.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from this study were recorded and analyzed. The responses were tallied and recorded as simple percentages or rankings. Statistical analyses were performed to test each hypothesis.

To test hypothesis number on regarding homework's value as a tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children, a Chi-Suare analysis was performed comparing the ratios of parents versus teachers who thought homework was valuable. A .10 level of significance

was used.

To test hypotheses numbers two, three, and four regarding the reasons for homework being seen as valuable, the subjects in which homework was most valuable, and the reasons for homework not being seen as valuable, a Spearman rank order correlation was calculated, using a .10 level of significance.

The results of these analyses are reported in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The questionnaire developed for this survey was distributed to 150 parents and 50 teachers of children in grades K-6 in the Francis Howell School District. Of the 150 parents, 79%, or 119 respondents returned completed questionnaires. However, four were eliminated because those respondents incorrectly completed all four parts of the questionnaire. Of the 50 teachers, 92%, or 46 respondents returned completed questionnaires. One hundred fifteen parent and 46 teacher responses were then tallied and summarized.

The data from this study were used to:

1. Assess parent and teacher awareness of the district's homework policy.

2. Compare parent and teacher attitudes toward the value of homework in the elementary school.

3. Compare the reasons why parents and teachers believed homework was a valuable tool in the elementary school.

4. Compare parent and teacher responses regarding the scope of homework in the elementary school.

5. Compare the reasons why parents and teachers

believed homework was not a valuable tool in the elementary school.

For the purpose of analysis and interpretation, the results are reported in tabular form. Both the number and percentages or rank are reported. Each table is accompanied by a summary and interpretation of the data.

Assessment of Awareness of District Homework Policy

The first part of Table 1 shows the number and percentages of the responses to the item in Part I of the questionnaire asking the parents and teachers to indicate if they were aware if the district had a homework policy. The second part of Table 1 shows the number of the respondents in each group who answered affirmatively for question 1 who were actually aware of what the district homework policy stated.

In the Francis Howell School District, 33% of the parents and 61% of the teachers knew that the district had a homework policy. Of this group, 65% of the parents and 85% of the teachers were aware of what the district policy stated. In comparing this with all the respondents, 22% of the parents and 52% of the teachers were aware of what the district's homework policy stated.

TABLE 1

RESPONSES REGARDING AWARENESS OF DISTRICT POLICY

Responses		Parents		Teachers	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Knowledge if district has homework policy	n	38	77	28	18
	%	33%	67%	61%	39%
Awareness of what policy states	n	25	13	24	4
	Note: Only those who answered 'yes' above are tallied here.				

The Value of Homework

Table 2 shows the number and percentage of responses of parents and teachers to the third item in Part I of the questionnaire asking the respondents to indicate whether or not they considered homework to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children.

It is evident from Table 2 that homework in the elementary school was considered valuable by both parents and teachers in the Francis Howell School District. Eighty-six percent of the parents and 76% of the teachers held homework in high favor.

TABLE 2

RESPONSES REGARDING HOMEWORK AS VALUABLE TOOL IN TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

Responses	Parents		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
Valuable	99	86%	35	76%
Not Valuable	16	14%	11	24%

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding homework as a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. To test this hypothesis, a Chi-Square was calculated using a .10 level of significance. The Chi-Square was 1.6921 with one degree of freedom. The probability was p=.19045. There was no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the statement that homework is a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. Hypothesis 1 was not rejected.

Reasons for Valuing Homework

Part II of the questionnaire was to be answered only by those respondents who valued homework as a

tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. Eleven reasons for favoring homework commonly stated in the research were listed in Part II of the questionnaire:

1. It extends the school day so more learning can take place.
2. It helps students do better on exams.
3. It provides practice for skills learned at school.
4. It keeps children from wasting time at night.
5. It prepares students for high school.
6. It develops organizational skills.
7. It develops research skills.
8. It improves study skills and work habits.
9. It builds character and self-discipline.
10. It develops responsibility.
11. It fosters an appreciation for school and learning.

Table 3 shows the number and the rank order of these responses by the parents and teachers who agreed with these as valuable reasons for assigning homework.

It is evident that both parents and teachers value homework for similar reasons. The parents' highest ranking reason was "improves study skills and work habits," and the teachers' highest ranking reason was "develops responsibility." However, both groups ranked "develops responsibility," "improves study skills and

work habits," and provides practice for skills learned at school" as their top three reasons for valuing homework. Both groups ranked "develops organizational skills," "builds character and self-discipline," and "develops research skills" fourth, fifth, and sixth, respectively. The reasons, "helps children do better on exams" and "prepares students for high school" were the next two reasons in the rankings of both groups, although not in the same order. Finally, the last three reasons, "fosters an appreciation for school and learning," "extends the day so more learning can take place," and "keeps children from wasting time" were ranked by both groups ninth, tenth, and eleventh, respectively.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of the responses regarding the reasons they consider homework valuable in the elementary school. To test this hypothesis, a Spearman rank order correlation was calculated, using a .10 level of significance. The correlation was R=.9681 which showed an extremely high correlation in the responses between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of the responses. Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

TABLE 3

RESPONSES REGARDING REASONS FOR HOMEWORK BEING VALUABLE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Reasons	Parents		Teachers	
	Tally	Rank	Tally	Rank
1. Extends the school day	5	10	2	10
2. Helps children do better on exams	33	7	7	8
3. Provides practice	68	3	29	2
4. Keeps children from wasting time	0	11	0	11
5. Prepares children for high school	19	8	9	6
6. Develops organizational skills	56	4	27	4
7. Develops research skills	36	6	9	6
8. Improves study skills and work habits	78	1	29	2
9. Builds character and self-discipline	42	5	13	5
10. Develops responsibility	69	2	31	1
11. Fosters an appreciation for school and learning	18	9	5	9

Scope of Homework

As in Part II, all questions in Part III were to be answered by the respondents who believed homework was a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. There was a total of 99 parents and 35 teachers that answered Part III. However, because some respondents checked more or less than the specified answers, some individual responses were eliminated from the tally. A total of countable answers for each particular question was included in Tables 4-9, and each table with percentages was figured based on that total.

Table 4 shows the number and rank order of the responses regarding the opinions of parents and teachers of which subjects are the most valuable for homework. It was difficult for both the parents and teachers to choose just one subject in which homework was valuable, as 22 of the parent responses and 11 of the teacher responses were eliminated. Of those responses that were countable, parents ranked reading as the most valuable, and teachers ranked math as most valuable. However, both groups ranked these two subjects highest in value among all 10 subjects.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the subject in which homework is most valuable.

A Spearman rank order correlation was calculated, using a .10 level of significance, to test this hypothesis. The correlation was R=.8509 which showed a very high correlation of the responses between the two groups. There was not a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of responses. Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

TABLE 4

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF SUBJECTS IN WHICH HOMEWORK IS MOST VALUABLE

Subjects	Parents		Teachers	
	Tally	Rank	Tally	Rank
Social Studies	4	4	0	5
Handwriting	1	7	0	5
Spelling	5	3	1	3
Reading	40	1	10	2
Music	1	7	0	5
Science	2	6	0	5
Health	0	9	0	5
Math	20	2	12	1
Art	0	9	0	5
English	4	4	1	3
Total	77		24	

Table 5 shows the number and percentages of the responses of parents and teachers to the question, "For homework to be most effective, who do you think should plan the assignment: the teacher, the pupils, or both the teacher and the pupils?"

TABLE 5

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF WHO SHOULD PLAN HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Who should plan lessons	Parents		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
Teacher	42	43%	14	41%
Pupils	0	0%	0	0%
Both teacher and pupils	56	57%	20	59%
Total	98	100%	34	100%

As evident in Table 5, there was strong agreement between parents and teachers on who should plan the assignments. Both parents and teachers chose both teachers and pupils most often (57% for parents, 59% for teachers). The second choice for both groups was the teacher (43% for parents and 41% for teachers). Similarly, neither group responded that pupils should plan the assignment (0%, 0%).

The next item in Part III of the questionnaire addressed the types of homework considered valuable in the elementary school. Seven descriptive categories of homework assignments were set up. Table 6 shows the number and percentages of each group which chose a given type of homework to be most valuable.

TABLE 6

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF TYPES OF HOMEWORK THAT SHOULD BE GIVEN

Types of homework	Parents		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
Regular written	2	2%	0	0%
Regular reading	3	3%	3	9%
Long range	2	2%	1	3%
Regular written and regular reading	43	46%	5	14%
Regular reading and long range	3	3%	1	3%
Regular written and long range	2	2%	3	9%
Regular written, regular reading, and long range	39	42%	22	63%
Total	94	100%	35	101%

The highest percentage of parents (46%) chose regular written and regular reading assignments as most valuable. The highest percentage of teachers (63%) chose regular written, regular reading, and long range assignments as most valuable. However, both groups ranked these two categories as their top two choices.

The next item in Part III of the questionnaire was devoted to how often homework should be assigned. Five choices were given--one, two, three, four, or five nights per week.

TABLE 7

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF HOW OFTEN HOMEWORK SHOULD BE ASSIGNED

Nights per week	Parents		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
1	1	1%	1	3%
2	28	30%	12	35%
3	44	47%	10	29%
4	15	16%	11	32%
5	6	6%	0	0%
Total	94	100%	34	99%

Table 7 shows the number and percentages of the responses of each group regarding the nights per week homework should be assigned. Three nights per week was chosen most often by parents (47%), with two nights being chosen second (30%), and four nights being chosen third (16%). Teachers chose two nights per week most often (35%), four nights next (32%), and three nights third (29%). Both groups chose one night per week (1% for parents, 3% for teachers) and five nights per week (6% for parents, 0% for teachers) least often.

The next three questions in Part II of the questionnaire addressed when homework should be assigned and how homework should be used. Question five asked, "Should homework be assigned on weekends or holidays?" Question six asked, "Should homework be assigned as punishment?" Question seven asked, "Should homework be used to determine report card grades?" Table 8 shows the number and percentages of the responses of both groups to these questions.

As evident from the table, parents and teachers agreed that homework should not be assigned on weekends or holidays (77% for parents, 88% for teachers). Similarly, 91% of the aprents and 94% of the teachers believed homework should not be assigned as punishment. However, the two groups did not agree on the question of whether or not homework should be used to determine

TABLE 8

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF WHEN HOMEWORK SHOULD BE ASSIGNED AND HOW HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE USED

		Parents		Total	Teachers		Total
		Yes	No		Yes	No	
Assigned on weekends or holidays	n	23	75	98	4	30	34
	%	23%	77%	100%	12%	88%	100%
Assigned as punishment	n	9	87	96	2	33	35
	%	9%	91%	100%	6%	94%	100%
Used to determine report card grades	n	69	27	96	14	20	34
	%	72%	28%	100%	41%	59%	100%

report card grades. Seventy-two percent of parents believed it should be used to determine report card grades, but 59% of teachers believed it should not be used to determine report card grades.

Table 9 shows the number and percentages of the responses of parents and teachers as to which grade level homework should begin.

TABLE 9

RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF THE GRADE LEVEL IN WHICH HOMEWORK SHOULD BEGIN

Grade	Parents		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
K	31	31%	15	43%
1	39	39%	12	34%
2	17	17%	2	6%
3	8	8%	5	14%
4	3	3%	1	3%
5	1	1%	0	0%
6	0	0%	0	0%
Total	99	99%	35	100%

Parents most often chose first grade as the level in which homework should begin (39%). Parents' second choice was kindergarten (31%), and their third choice was second grade (17%). Teachers most often chose kindergarten (43%) as the grade level in which homework should begin. Teachers' second choice was first grade (34%), and their third choice was third grade (14%). Fourth grade (3% for parents, 3% for teachers), fifth grade (1% for parents, 0% for teachers), and sixth grade (0%, 0%) were chosen least often by both groups.

Tables 10 and 11 show the numbers and percentages of how much time should be devoted to homework in each grade level. The percentages were based on how many responses were received that homework should be given in that grade level. Thus, the totals and percentages change with each grade level.

As evident from the tables, there was strong agreement between parents and teachers as to how much time should be devoted to homework in the grade levels. The highest percentage of parents (75%) and teachers (86%) believed 0-10 minutes of homework should be given to kindergarten students. Similarly, the highest percentage of parents (43%) and teachers (50%) believed 10-20 minutes of homework was appropriate for first graders. Fifty percent of parents and 50% of teachers also believed 10-20 minutes was appropriate for second

TABLE 10

PARENT AND TEACHER RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO HOMEWORK IN EACH GRADE LEVEL

Grade	Time in Minutes											
	Parent 0-10		Teacher 0-10		Parent 10-20		Teacher 10-20		Parent 20-30		Teacher 20-30	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
K	24	75%	13	86%	6	19%	2	13%	1	3%	0	0%
1	27	39%	11	42%	30	43%	13	50%	10	14%	2	7%
2	10	12%	6	21%	41	50%	14	50%	22	27%	8	29%
3	2	2%	1	3%	30	34%	13	39%	38	43%	13	39%
4	0	0%	0	0%	12	13%	2	6%	40	44%	18	53%
5	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	1	3%	23	25%	5	16%
6	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	13%	4	12%

TABLE 11

PARENT AND TEACHER RESPONSES REGARDING OPINIONS OF HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO HOMEWORK IN EACH GRADE LEVEL

Grade	Time in Minutes											
	Parent 30-45		Teacher 30-45		Parent 45-60		Teacher 45-60		Parent 60-up		Teacher 60-up	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
K	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
1	2	3%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	7	9%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
3	15	17%	6	18%	2	2%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
4	27	30%	10	29%	8	9%	4	12%	3	3%	0	0%
5	37	41%	16	50%	22	24%	10	31%	7	8%	0	0%
6	38	42%	11	33%	18	20%	13	40%	23	25%	5	15%

graders. These were the highest percentages for both groups in that grade level. Parents (43%) and teachers (39%) believed 20-30 minutes should be devoted to homework in third grade. These were the highest percentages of both groups in that grade level. Parents and teachers also agreed on the amount of time that should be spent on homework in fourth grade. Forty-four percent of parents and 53% of teachers believed 20-30 minutes of homework was appropriate in fourth grade. Forty-one percent of parents and 50% of teachers believed 30-45 minutes of homework should be given in fifth grade. These were the highest percentages for both groups. The only grade level in which parents and teachers did not agree was sixth grade. Parents (42%) most often believed 30-45 minutes of homework should be given in that grade level, but teachers (40%) most often believed 45-60 minutes of homework was appropriate for sixth graders.

Reasons For Not Valuing Homework

Part IV of the questionnaire was to be answered only by those respondents who did not value homework as a tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. Twelve reasons for not favoring homework commonly stated in research were listed in this part of the questionnaire:

1. The school day is long enough already.

2. It takes away from needed leisure activity.

3. It is often a form of punishment.

4. It really doesn't help children learn more.

5. It is often not corrected by teachers.

6. It disrupts family life.

7. Teaching should be done in school, not sent home.

8. It is often copied by children.

9. Parents are not always qualified to help.

10. It causes anxiety in children.

11. It reduces children's interest in school.

12. Since all children are often given the same assignment, it does not meet the individual needs of children.

Table 12 shows the number and the rank order of these responses by the parents and teachers who agreed with these as reasons for not considering homework to be valuable in the elementary school. It is evident that parents and teachers who do not value homework do so for similar reasons. The reasons "the school day is long enough" and "takes away from needed leisure activity" were ranked first and second by both the parents and teachers. Similarly, "it is used as a form of punishment" and "it is not corrected by teachers" were chosen least often by both parents and teachers.

TABLE 12

RESPONSES REGARDING REASONS FOR HOMEWORK NOT BEING VALUABLE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Reasons	Parents		Teachers	
	Tally	Rank	Tally	Rank
1. School day is long enough	15	1	11	1
2. Takes away from leisure activity	10	2	10	2
3. Used as form of punishment	1	11	1	11
4. Doesn't help children learn more	3	8	2	8
5. Not corrected by teachers	1	11	1	11
6. Disrupts family life	3	8	7	3
7. Teaching should be done at school	4	6	2	8
8. Often copied by children	4	6	2	8
9. Parents not qualified to help	8	5	5	5
10. Causes anxiety	9	3	4	6
11. Reduces interest in school	9	3	3	7
12. Does not meet individual needs	3	8	7	3

The biggest differences were in the rankings of "disrupts family life" (parents ranked eighth, teachers ranked third), "causes anxiety" (parents ranked third, teachers ranked sixth), and "reduces interest in school" (parents ranked third, and teachers ranked seventh).

Hypothesis 4 stated there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the reasons homework is not considered valuable in the elementary school. To test this hypothesis, a Spearman rank order correlation was calculated. The correlation was R=.6726 which showed a fairly high correlation in the responses between the two groups. There was not a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of the responses. Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to determine the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the value of homework in grades K-6 in the Francis Howell School District. Their opinions were sought concerning the following:

1. Whether or not homework was considered to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of children in elementary school
2. Reasons for choosing homework as valuable, by those who held this opinion
3. The subjects in which homework was most valuable
4. Who should plan homework assignments
5. How often homework should be assigned
6. Whether or not homework should be assigned on weekends or holidays
7. Whether or not homework should be assigned as punishment
8. Whether or not homework should be used to determine report card grades
9. When homework should begin

10. How much time should be devoted to homework in each grade level

11. The reasons homework was not considered valuable in the teaching-learning process of elementary children, by those who held this opinion.

This study was also designed to determine parent and teacher awareness of district homework policy.

It was hypothesized that there would not be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding homework as a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. This hypothesis was not rejected. The second hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers in the correlation of the responses regarding the reasons they considered homework valuable in the elementary school. This hypothesis was rejected. It was also hypothesized there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the subjects in which homework was most valuable. This hypothesis was rejected. The final hypothesis stated there would be a significant difference between the opinions of parents and teachers regarding the reasons homework was not considered valuable in the elementary school. This hypothesis was also rejected.

Conclusions

There is evidence in this study to support the following major conclusions regarding homework in the elementary schools of the Francis Howell School District.

1. Less than one-fourth of the parents and just over half of the teachers were aware of what the district's homework policy stated.

2. The general concept of homework was held in high favor by parents and teachers in the Francis Howell School District. Eighty-six percent of the parents and 76% of the teachers considered homework to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children.

3. Parents and teachers generally agreed on the reasons homework was valuable in the elementary school. Both groups ranked "develops responsibility," "improves study skills and work habits," and "provides practice for skills learned at school" as their top three reasons for considering homework valuable.

4. Parents and teachers generally agreed on the subjects in which homework was most valuable. Both groups ranked math and reading as their top two choices, although not in the same order.

5. There was strong agreement between parents and teachers on who should plan homework assignments.

The highest percentage of both groups believed homework should be planned by both the teacher and pupils.

6. Teachers held assignments involving regular written assignments, regular reading assignments, and long range projects as most valuable, while parents favored a combination of regular written and regular reading assignments.

7. Parents most often believed three nights per week of homework was beneficial to elementary children, while teachers most often believed two nights per week was desirable.

8. The majority of parents and teachers did not believe homework should be assigned on weekends or holidays.

9. Both groups strongly agreed that homework should not be assigned as punishment.

10. Seventy-two percent of parents believed homework should be used in determining report card grades, but 59% of teachers believed it should not be used to determine report card grades.

11. Parents most often believed homework should begin in first grade, and teachers most often believed homework should begin in kindergarten.

12. There was strong agreement between parents and teachers as to how much time should be devoted

to homework in the grade levels. The only grade level in which they did not agree was sixth grade.

13. Members of both groups who did not favor homework held this opinion for similar reasons, namely, they thought that the school day was long enough already and that homework took time away from needed leisure activities.

Limitations

Limitations of this study should be considered:

1. This study is limited by the use of one type of school district. The results cannot be generalized to other school districts.

2. Only opinions of parents and teachers were sought for the purpose of this study. It is limited by excluding the opinions of administrators and students.

3. Because of the small number of countable responses to some of the questions, it was impossible to draw valid conclusions.

4. Although the percentage of responses from the sample of teachers was 92%, only 79% of the sample of parents returned surveys. Since participants were randomly selected from their populations, the results, although indicative, must be suspect.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a result of this study, the following research suggestions could merit further investigation:

1. Replicate this study in other locations. More metropolitan or rural districts might reveal more diverse attitudes between teachers and parents.

2. Survey districts nationwide to determine what types of homework policies are in existence throughout the country.

3. Expand this study by surveying administrators and students to reveal the total community attitude toward homework.

4. Construct an explicitly stated homework policy for the Francis Howell School District based on the opinions and expectations held by the respondents in this study.

5. Conduct an experiment regarding student achievement in districts having homework compared to those that do not assign homework.

APPENDIX A

FRANCIS HOWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework means many things. It can range from finding pictures illustrating objects whose names begin with "d" to working page 96 in the arithmetic text; from collecting colored leaves in the fall to memorizing a poem; from interviewing a neighbor about his/her business to drilling on addition combinations; from watching a pertinent television program to rewriting spelling words ten times.

Homework is given for many reasons, and the reasons vary with the age of the child, the teacher, and the child's needs. For these reasons, any attempt to draw up hard and fast guidelines in terms of quantity, time, or pages, is pointless. There are, however, some guiding principles which are consistent with current educational philosophy, with principles of learning psychology, and with demands upon the time of today's children, which should be of help to teachers.

There are five general reasons for assigning homework which are most often suggested by teachers and which can be supported by research and principles of educational psychology.

1. After a child's extended absence, there may be work which can be done at home to provide learning experiences missed at school.

2. Sometimes it is necessary for children to finish at home, work they failed to complete during the school day because of inefficient use of time or because of extra activities such as band lessons.

3. Occasionally children can profit from activities which cannot be done at school. Examples are: Finding appropriate newspaper and magazine pictures and stories to accompany a topic being studied; interviewing a person about a business, profession, or hobby; collecting items for science study such as leaves, insects, etc.; family discussion to determine parents' viewpoint on a national issue.

4. Home study can often enrich the school program through the reading of library books, watching selected television programs, research on a topic of the pupil's individual interest, selecting family photographs of trips taken to points being studied, and reading the daily newspaper.

5. At times extra drill is needed on routine fundamentals. This could be practice on spelling words, memorizing multiplication combinations, additional oral reading, etc.

NOTE:

There are potential pitfalls in each of the above reasons. No amount of homework can fully replace the experiences missed during an extended absence. If the regular classroom program is well planned and vital, the typical routine busy work which can be assigned as "make-up" is the least significant aspect of the missed work.

When teachers require work to be done at home because it is not done at school, they must be careful. Sometimes children do not do their work at school because they do not know how. Rather than profess ignorance, they pretend not to care, and do not do the work. Some children do not do work at school so they may take it home and get help from parents or fellow students. It is not unusual for two or more children to cooperate on an assignment, thus cutting down the amount each has to do.

Assigning work to be done at home which cannot be done at school either as an integral part of the program or an enrichment is probably the easiest to defend. Here, too, though the teacher must make sure that certain conditions exist; time and resources must be available. There must be conditions in the home which permit home study. Children must fully understand the assignment and have the necessary skills to complete it.

APPENDIX B

PARENT AND TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

PART I Indicate your opinion to each question by circling your answer to the right.

1. Do you know if your school district has a homework policy? yes no

If you answered yes to question 1, answer question 2, and then answer question 3. If you answered no to question 1, omit question 2, and go on to question 3.

2. Do you know what your district's homework policy states? yes no

3. Do you consider homework to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children? yes no

If you answered yes to question 3, go on to PARTS II and III. If you answered no, omit PARTS II and III, and go on to PART IV.

PART II Place a check next to the five reasons that best support your opinion that homework is a valuable teaching-learning tool in the elementary school. (Choose five.)

I value homework in the teaching-learning process of elementary children because:

1. It extends the school day so more learning can take place. _____
2. It helps students do better on exams. _____
3. It provides practice for skills learned at school. _____
4. It keeps children from wasting time at night. _____
5. It prepares students for high school. _____
6. It develops organizational skills. _____
7. It develops research skills. _____
8. It improves study skills and work habits. _____
9. It builds character and self-discipline. _____
10. It develops responsibility. _____
11. It fosters an appreciation for school and learning. _____

PART III Please put a check next to your responses to the following questions.

1. In which of the following subjects do you think homework is most valuable? (Choose one.)

____social studies ____science
____handwriting ____health
____spelling ____math
____reading ____art
____music ____English

2. For homework to be most effective, who do you think should plan the assignment?

____teacher ____pupils ____both teacher and pupils

3. Listed below are seven categories of homework. Note that the last four are combinations of the first three. Place a check next to the one category you consider to be a good homework plan for elementary children.

____a. Regular written assignments
____b. Regular reading assignments
____c. Long range assignments (reports, research, experiments, etc.)
____d. A combination of regular written assignments and regular reading assignments
____e. A combination of regular reading assignments and long range assignments
____f. A combination of regular written assignments and long range assignments
____g. A combination of regular written assignments, regular reading assignments, and long range assignments

4. How many nights per week should homework be assigned?

____one ____two ____three ____four ____five

5. Should homework be assigned on weekends or holidays?

____yes ____no

6. Should homework be assigned as punishment?

____yes ____no

7. Should homework be used to determine report card grades?

____yes ____no

PART III (Continued)

8a. Circle the grade level in the left column in which you think homework should begin.

8b. Beginning with the grade level you circled for 8a, check the blank that indicates how much time you think should be spent on homework in that and each succeeding grade level.

	0-10 min.	10-20 min.	20-30 min.	30-45 min.	45-60 min.	60-up min.
Kinder-garten...	____	____	____	____	____	____
First....	____	____	____	____	____	____
Second...	____	____	____	____	____	____
Third....	____	____	____	____	____	____
Fourth...	____	____	____	____	____	____
Fifth....	____	____	____	____	____	____
Sixth....	____	____	____	____	____	____

PART IV Complete this section only if you do not consider homework to be a valuable tool in the teaching-learning process of elementary children. (Qu. 3, PART I)

Place a check next to the five reasons that best support your opinion that homework is not a valuable teaching-learning tool in the elementary school. (Choose five.)

I do not value homework in the teaching-learning process of elementary children because:

1. The school day is long enough already. _____
2. It takes away from needed leisure activity. _____
3. It is often a form of punishment. _____
4. It really doesn't help children learn more. _____
5. It is often not corrected by teachers. _____
6. It disrupts family life. _____
7. Teaching should be done in school, not sent home. _____
8. It is often copied by children. _____
9. Parents are not always qualified to help. _____
10. It causes anxiety in children. _____
11. It reduces children's interest in school. _____
12. Since all children are often given the same assignment, it does not meet the individual needs of children. _____

APPENDIX C

Rita Beard
2 Oak Terrace Dr.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Phone (314) 272-4482

Dear_____:

I am an instructor in the Francis Howell School District and a graduate student attending Lindenwood College. For my master's thesis, a survey of Francis Howell School District will be conducted to determine parents' and teachers' opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. Dr. Schuppan has given permission to conduct the survey in the district, and you have been randomly chosen as a participant in the study.

Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire, following the instructions indicated for each section? All replies will be respected and held in confidence. An addressed, stamped envelope is provided for your completed survey.

Because you are part of a random sample, it is essential to the success of the study that I receive a response from you. I appreciate the time taken to reply, and thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rita Beard

Rita Beard

Richard Schuppan

Dr. Richard Schuppan
Assistant Superintendent

Rita Beard
2 Oak Terrace Dr.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Phone (314) 272-4482

Dear Fellow Teacher:

I am an instructor in the Francis Howell School District and a graduate student attending Lindenwood College. For my master's thesis, a survey of Francis Howell School District will be conducted to determine parents' and teachers' opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. Dr. Schuppan has given permission to conduct the survey in the district, and you have been randomly chosen as a participant in the study.

Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire, following the instructions indicated for each section? All replies will be respected and held in confidence. An addressed envelope is provided for your completed survey. Please send it to me at Hollenbeck through the interschool mail.

Because you are part of a random sample, it is essential to the success of the study that I receive a response from you. I appreciate the time taken to reply, and thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rita Beard

Rita Beard

Richard Schuppan

Dr. Richard Schuppan
Assistant Superintendent

Rita Beard
2 Oak Terrace Dr.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Phone (314) 272-4482

Dear_____:

Approximately two weeks ago a letter was sent asking that you participate in a survey to determine parents' and teachers' opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. Your response has not yet been received. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and mail it back to me. The success of this study is dependent upon the return of the surveys, so it would be very much appreciated if you would respond. I have included another copy of the questionnaire and a stamped, addressed envelope with this letter in case you have misplaced the original.

Again, I do appreciate the time taken to reply, and thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rita Beard

Rita Beard

Rita Beard
2 Oak Terrace Dr.
St. Peters, MO 63376
Phone (314) 272-4482

Dear Fellow Teacher:

Approximately two weeks ago a letter was sent asking that you participate in a survey to determine parents' and teachers' opinions regarding the value and scope of homework in the elementary school. Your response has not yet been received. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and mail it back to me. The success of this study is dependent upon the return of the surveys, so it would be very much appreciated if you would respond. I have included another copy of the questionnaire and an addressed envelope with this letter in case you have misplaced the original. Please send the completed survey to me at Hollenbeck through the inter-school mail.

Again, I do appreciate the time taken to reply, and thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rita Beard

Rita Beard

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