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THESES . . .

A Questionnaire Survey of Ordean Junior High  
School Students' Reactions to Homework  
Duluth, Minnesota, 1958

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

Homework has been called the most poorly administered phase of public education. The question has been continually raised as to whether homework is worthwhile, with the answer often being an emphatic yes or no, and few taking the middle ground. Yet only limited research has been undertaken concerning this question. Various opinion surveys dealing with homework reveal persistent disagreement among pupils, parents, and educators. A statement by Swenson can be used to support this.

When Otto summarized research evidence for the 1950 Encyclopedia of Educational Research, he said: "The gist of the research evidence is none too favorable to assigned homework. Questionnaires to pupils, parents, and educators have shown that pupils and parents are in favor of homework, but that educators do not believe so strongly in it."<sup>1</sup>

Immediately there will arise in some minds an inclination to disagree with this summary of research in the home study field. It appears to many that it is the educators and teachers who favor homework, and the parents and pupils who are opposed. Those who are teaching and giving

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<sup>1</sup>Swenson, Esther J. and others, "Research on Homework," Journal of Education, March, 1955, p. 20.

out assignments must certainly be aware of the complaints that come from both parents and students. As an indication of this attitude on the part of students, a situation that happened recently in San Francisco can be quoted.

Mortimer Adler told 500 San Francisco Boy Scouts that "the future of our country depends on your learning more than what the schools now require. A serious deficiency in the schools is that you're not given enough homework." Boos and hisses roared throughout the auditorium as youngsters forgot the Scout oath to be friendly, courteous, and kind.<sup>2</sup>

If the student complains that homework is a waste of time, he can find many educational authorities who will take his side. There are also experts one can quote in order to impress on students or parents that homework teaches independent study habits, gives the student necessary practice in basic skills, and stimulates initiative and responsibility. In fact, a survey by the National Education Association shows a wider range of professional opinions on the value of homework than on any other question of school policy.

#### I. THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

This study was undertaken for the purpose of determining the reaction of Ordean Junior High School students in

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<sup>2</sup>Denson, John (Editor), "Newsmakers," Newsweek, December 9, 1957, p. 50.

regard to the practice of assignment-giving by the faculty during the first half of the 1957-58 school year. The expressed goal was not to get rid of homework, as is advocated by some educators, but rather the acquisition of facts and information that could prove valuable in the improvement of methods of teaching and the assigning of homework.

It is fairly evident that study outside the classroom will be with us for a long time regardless of whether its foundation is based on good teaching practice or on tradition. More directly then, the point to be determined is what type of assignments should be given, and how can they be kept reasonable in amount and as to difficulty in the minds of those who are doing them. One of the best ways to begin would be to discover the attitudes of the pupils toward the work being given them at present. It should prove helpful to make comparisons of the reactions and study habits of junior high school boys in contrast to those of girls at the same grade level. Also comparisons can be made of high, average, and low students' reactions and study habits to see if any variations exist. In order to obtain satisfactory information, it was necessary to outline specific objectives before attempting to develop a questionnaire. These objectives were grouped into four main categories as follows:

I. Student Reactions, Opinions, and Needs

A. To find the general reaction of the Ordean student body

- to the amount of homework that is given at present.
- B. To get student reaction as to the value of their present homework.
  - C. To learn student opinion as to whether or not homework can further learning skills started in class or create interest to look up unknowns.
  - D. To discover if homework is accepted in some subjects and not in others.
  - E. To learn whether students feel homework should be used as a disciplinary measure, and if punishment should be used to force completion of assignments.
  - F. To gain insight into what pupils believe to be their parents' opinions regarding the amount and value of homework now given at Ordean.
  - G. To gain a better understanding of student needs by discovering how adequately their present needs are being met in the assigning of homework.

## II. Comparisons

- A. To compare the reactions to homework and the study habits of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students to find if any differences exist.
- B. To compare the reactions and study habits of lower students with those of average and higher levels of educational achievement.
- C. To discover any variations in the study habits or opinions of Ordean boys as compared to girls.

## III. Student Behavior

- A. To study student behavior in situations when they are taxed by the amount of homework, difficulty of assignments, or by outside temptations of radio and television.
- B. To discover pupil study habits as regards the place and time of home study.
- C. To learn whether copying another student's homework is a common practice at Ordean Junior High School.
- D. To discover the role of parents in the satisfactory completion of homework.

## IV. General Objective

- A. To assist teachers to improve themselves through the use of assignment techniques which students find most interesting and helpful and through the avoidance of techniques indicated as least helpful.

As one reads of the controversy raging throughout our schools over the value of homework, it appears that only incidental attention has been given to the opinions and practices of those most concerned, the students. Therefore, this questionnaire survey was mainly designed to give a selected sample of Ordean students a comprehensive and systematic opportunity to describe their views regarding homework.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SURVEY

There exists in education an urgent need for additional research in the field of homework, for the evidence gathered so far either in support or opposition is far from conclusive.

This disagreement regarding the assigning of outside class study is an indication of the need for joint study of homework problems. Parents, teachers, and students must come to understand one another's views and work toward a cooperative improvement of the situation. A solution to the problem, at the individual classroom level at least, might be possible.

Included in any survey of homework problems should be discussions of the reasons for homework, discussion of the values and drawbacks of assignments, an inquiry into the amount of time that should be spent, and definitions of the responsibilities of the three groups mainly involved,

teachers, pupils, and parents. An area of complete agreement will very likely never be reached. However, the conversation and questioning involved in participating in a study of homework brings into the open many misunderstandings and grievances which the three groups have with respect to each other. Any undertaking in an educational survey should result in a gain of fresh insights into the value of education in general. Here is a chance for new understanding and an accompanying sympathy toward each other's views. The final result should be at the very least the acquiring of a clearer idea of how best to help the students, who are the focus of the problem.

It is always important that a teacher be cognizant of the attitudes and reactions of the majority of the pupils in class in relation to methods of instruction. When classroom teaching methods become disagreeable to the larger part of any class, the situation may easily degenerate into one of tension and hatred toward the subject matter. Particularly when a teacher lacks creativeness in varying teaching and assignment methods, it is well for that instructor to explore various techniques of discovering what assignments appeal most to youngsters and provide the greatest benefit in the form of longer retention of acquired knowledge. One of the best ways to get such information would naturally be to ask the student. However, asking for oral responses to questions concerning present methods being used by faculty

members will often bring only hesitant and reluctant replies. Criticisms might breed resentment. Thus, only a limited number of students would freely express their ideas. Teachers might feel a defense of their methods was necessary. Therefore, the best way to gain such information would seemingly be through use of a standard form in which students could choose alternatives when answering questions concerning homework at Ordean. That these questionnaires be kept anonymous was also highly desirable to insure free expression of ideas without fear of reprisals. Any reliable, concerted attempt to answer questions such as 'are the results of homework commensurate with the investment of time and energy by pupils, parents, and teachers?' can very well be made into a questionnaire study from which everyone involved stands to benefit greatly.

### III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Many people think of homework as referring only to that schoolwork which is actually done in the pupil's home. Others take a much broader view and define homework as any work completed outside the school, whether it be at home, a friend's home, the public library, or any other place. Thus, research on homework might well begin with a definition of what it is. For the purposes of this survey, the following definitions will be used.

Homework or home study-Any schoolwork which is completed or worked on outside of school, in places such as the home, public library, or a friend's home.

Assignment-Any schoolwork given by the teacher for completion outside the regular class hour. It will often be termed outside-class assignment or some similar expression. It is a more inclusive term than homework in that it includes work completed within the school such as in the school library, during study periods, and in the activity period.

Class study-Any teacher-supervised study time within the regular one-hour class period during which the students are preparing written work or reading.

#### IV. HISTORY OF THE HOMEWORK PROBLEM

As was mentioned earlier in a quote by Swenson, most of the research conducted in the field of home study prior to 1950 has been unfavorable to homework. In checking the various studies of fifteen or twenty years ago, the greatest number seemed to indicate that school children who were assigned homework did no better than those who were not given work to do at home. Usually the authors of these studies denounced nearly all homework, especially for the grades below junior high school. It was called a wasteful and foolish procedure. Some parents welcomed such discoveries while many others, who grew up with homework as a

part of their schooling, no doubt felt that it kept them informed of what their children were learning in school. Of more recent years increasing numbers are still voicing dissatisfaction with homework, while others are equally strong in their support.

How far back does this question of the value of homework go? A check into the past reveals the more recent campaign to de-emphasize homework is certainly not based on a new idea. In fact, Dr. Starr Miller, Dean of the Bessie Tift College of Forsythe, Georgia, claims a first in this field on the basis of an 1897-98 catalogue of this institution. This catalogue is quoted on the matter of homework as follows:

We do not believe in overcrowding children's minds. Our method is the result of much study of the young mind, and our opinions are based on this and experience. . . . Let the children be free and happy, and we will have no trouble in making them understand and enjoy their recitations. Lesson preparations for those students in the lower elementary group is not desirable.<sup>3</sup>

We can be certain of one thing: the homework problem has been with us for a long time, at least since the turn of the century. Benjamin Fine reports that the "controversy over homework arose as far back as 1904 when a German educator conducting an experiment with twelve and thirteen year old children, concluded that homework hurt

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<sup>3</sup>Miller, Starr, "Was This the First to Question the Value of Homework?," Clearing House, February, 1955, p. 359.

rather than helped them in their schoolwork."<sup>4</sup>

According to A Cyclopedia of Education,<sup>5</sup> the studies of such men as Schmidt, Roller, and Mayer, published between 1904 and 1908, were the first in the home study field. However, these men did not go farther than to point out the need for being reasonable when giving homework assignments. Keeping this beginning idea in mind and knowing that homework cannot easily be abolished because the tradition is ingrained in the system, many educators have since turned to the practice of limiting homework to a bare minimum.

Apparently there is no single statement about homework that would command a unanimous vote of approval. However, the preponderance of expert opinion at the present time appears to have come to the position that conventional homework assignments have little value for younger children and could well be eliminated in the lower grades. Well-planned, creative homework would seem to have a place in the junior and senior high schools though, if it is limited.

#### V. RECENT STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF HOMEWORK

Homework is a matter of almost universal concern to

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<sup>4</sup>Fine, Benjamin, "No More Homework?-The Pros and Cons," New York Times Magazine, January 13, 1952, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Monroe, Paul, A Cyclopedia of Education, Vol. 3 and 4, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1914, p. 305.

parents and teachers who have the responsibility for seeing that it is completed. Parents are often faced with demands for assistance which they sometimes cannot give and, according to some educators, should not give. As a result, parents, as well as educators, have become sharply divided in their attitudes toward homework. With such widespread concern over one area of education, one would expect to find numerous research projects being undertaken throughout the country on all phases of the homework problem. Due to the complexities of the American educational system and the very nature of the homework dilemma, the research that has been done has only scratched the surface. Here is an instance where a great deal more individual situation study is absolutely necessary, for what holds true for one section of the school population may be different in another group. Even within the same school system, homework policy may vary from token assignments to heavy doses of home study. Before progressing further into this particular study of Ordean, it would be worthwhile to relate the findings of some extensive studies into various phases of the homework problem.

The majority of studies have probably been made to examine the value of homework rather than to investigate questions regarding the amount of such work, student study habits, or other related areas. One such study was made by James V. McGill, a teacher in the New York schools, who

persuaded four colleagues in social studies to help with an experiment. They selected 185 pairs of students, with each pair closely matched in ability. Homework was given to one group, and not to the other. On the basis of tests given at the end of the year, the conclusion was reached that:

In the past teachers and supervisors have assumed that better learning ensued when pupils did homework. This experiment tends to show that in the field of social studies, it makes no difference whether or not homework is assigned or done.<sup>6</sup>

Other similar experiences using control groups and tests to evaluate differences at the end of the year have reached somewhat the same conclusions. However, when it came to asking the opinions of parents and students as to the value of homework, a majority of studies indicated that both groups thought homework was valuable. Typical of this opinion was a questionnaire study of junior high school student's reactions to homework reported by Swenson.<sup>7</sup> Approval of homework was given by approximately 43 percent of the student population in the school, while many other replies indicated qualified support of homework in certain subjects and not in others. Mathematics, for instance had the highest favorable response. Other studies have also been convincing enough to report as the New York Times Magazine did

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<sup>6</sup>McGill, James V., "How Valuable Is Homework?," High Points, September, 1950, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup>Swenson, Esther J. and Others, op. cit., p. 21.

that:

Regardless of the controversy among educators over whether or not homework is of value, the practice of assigning it still flourishes. Survey after survey shows that parents approve of it. Even the youngsters, when their opinion is asked, say they think homework is a good idea.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of homework lies not so much in the completion itself, but in what the student gains from the effort. Naturally the student's feeling about homework depends largely on whether or not it is reasonable and purposeful. If it is neither, he will feel his time could be spent more usefully or pleasureably in some other way. Is it right to send a student home with an armload of books to prepare to be educated? Investigations of this aspect of the homework problem are scarce, for they necessitate a detailed statistical study of the effect of homework on scholarship and achievement while excluding the effect of class study. In a search of library reference materials only one statistical study was found in which an attempt was made to determine the effect of homework upon scholastic success. The data in this study was collected and interpreted by William E. Anderson.<sup>9</sup> In this study careful con-

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<sup>8</sup>Barclay, Dorothy, "How Much Homework-For Parents," New York Times Magazine, November 14, 1954, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup>Anderson William E., "An Attempt Through The Use of Experimental Techniques To Determine The Effect of Home Assignments Upon Scholastic Success," Journal of Education Research, October, 1946, p. 141.

sideration was given to the correct use of statistical techniques. Two groups of twenty-nine junior high school students were set up on the basis of mental ability tests. One group was the experimental group, the other a control group. In order to keep all factors except homework the same, such techniques as teacher conferences, standardization of procedures, and assignment of both groups to the same teachers under similar classroom conditions were used. The main conclusion reached on the basis of this study was that, "Properly assigned and evaluated homework may improve scholarship."<sup>10</sup> This conclusion was based on significant differences found in the test scores which were advantageous to the home study experimental group.

Thus we find a variety of studies have been made regarding homework, but they have not been very widespread or numerous. As expected most of them are local studies rather than nationwide or even statewide in scope. Minnesota was one state canvassed for opinions on a question that was also asked Ordean students in this questionnaire study: "Do you think school children in this area get too much homework to do?, about the right amount?, or not enough?" The statewide replies, reported in the Minneapolis Sunday Tribune,<sup>11</sup> showed that 48 percent of the people polled felt

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>11</sup>Minneapolis Sunday Tribune, "Majority Say School Is

that the students had about the right amount of homework, 25 percent "not enough homework," 21 percent "no opinion," 4 percent "too much homework," and the remaining 2 percent gave qualified opinions.

This brief review of previous studies of the problem should indicate that any critical examination of current practices and trends in the field can be valuable. Only through analysis and experiments can we determine student needs and learn techniques by which the home, school, and community can work together for the greatest benefit to the student.

## VI. EXTENT OF THE SURVEY

The author of this questionnaire survey was a member of the Ordean Junior High School faculty during the 1957-58 school year. In a preliminary study into the importance and practicability of making a concentrated study of the homework situation as it existed in the school, it was felt that an extensive survey including students, parents, and teachers might be undertaken. No doubt such a thorough study would reveal added information that would be of value in analyzing the situation more completely. However, it was finally decided to limit the survey to a student questionnaire form only. In this way greater concentration could be

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Too Easy," February 23, 1958, p. 1.

placed on one important area of the homework problem rather than a less intensive study of all three groups.

Ordean Junior High School is one of seven junior high schools in Duluth. Most of the students who attend live in close proximity to the school. Since the survey was limited to the reactions of a selected sample of Ordean students, the results should not be taken as being representative of junior high school pupils in the other Duluth schools. Their situations would probably be somewhat different since there is no citywide, nor even individual school policy that prescribes the amount or kinds of homework to be given. This is up to the individual classroom teacher to decide.

#### VII. THE SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE AND NUMBER OF PUPILS

The homework questionnaire was given to a selected sample of students in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades of Ordean. The survey was based on a total sample of 260 pupils. This number represents 36.77 percent, or slightly more than one third, of the total school enrollment of 707 pupils at the time of the survey. It was decided to limit the number of pupils taking the questionnaire in order to increase the number of questions asked and still avoid making the tabulation and interpretation of the data too unwieldy. A higher reliability can also be achieved by making the questionnaire long enough to adequately cover each of the objectives.

An attempt was made to keep an even distribution of pupils from each of the three grade levels. To achieve this and also make the administration of the form easier, three home room groups were selected from each grade. Due to variations in class size, the sample included 82 ninth, 92 eighth, and 86 seventh grade pupils, or as expressed in percentages, 31.5 percent of the ninth, 35.4 percent of the eighth, and 33.1 percent of the seventh grade pupils. The total number of boys answering the questionnaire was 132 and the number of girls was 128.

Great care was taken to insure that as representative a sample of students as possible was obtained for the study, for an adequate sampling procedure was necessary in order to get a more reliable measure of student reactions. Since one of the objectives of the survey was to compare students of high, average, and low achievement levels, it was important that the nine classes chosen included students of varying abilities and achievements. A careful check of homeroom enrollments and cumulative records in the office revealed the general composition of all of the homerooms, indicating that some were predominately high groups, some average, and some low. After selection of three homerooms at each grade level, a check with the respective teachers was made to further authenticate the findings from the office records.

The selection of the seventh and eighth grade samples

was less difficult than that of the ninth grade. This was due to the fact that there is more grouping according to abilities in the lower two grades. One group that was classified as high, one average, and one low were selected from both the seventh and eighth grade homerooms. At the ninth grade level there was greater mixing of students of various achievement levels. This resulted mainly from the fact that these students have a choice of elective subjects, and therefore, follow different programs of study. Greater scrutiny of the ninth grade classes was necessary to insure that an adequate number of low, average, and high students would be given a chance to voice their opinions. In this manner it was felt that a more representative sample of Ordean students could be obtained.

Table I gives the distribution of students taking the questionnaire according to their sex, grade, and achievement level.

TABLE I

CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENTS TAKING HOMEWORK QUESTIONNAIRE  
 ACCORDING TO GRADE LEVEL, SEX, AND ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL

Grade Level	Number of Girls	Percent of Girls	Number of Boys	Percent of Boys	Total Pupils	Percent of Pupils
<u>Grade Seven</u>						
Low Students	8	18.2	9	21.4	17	19.7
Average Students	16	36.4	23	54.8	39	45.3
High Students	<u>20</u>	<u>45.4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>23.8</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>38.0</u>
Totals	44	100.0	42	100.0	86	100.0
<u>Grade Eight</u>						
Low Students	10	20.8	18	40.9	28	30.4
Average Students	18	37.5	15	34.1	33	35.9
High Students	<u>20</u>	<u>41.7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>25.0</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>33.7</u>
Totals	48	100.0	44	100.0	92	100.0
<u>Grade Nine</u>						
Low Students	7	19.4	13	28.2	20	24.4
Average Students	17	47.3	19	41.3	36	43.9
High Students	<u>12</u>	<u>33.3</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>30.5</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>31.7</u>
Totals	36	100.0	46	100.0	82	100.0
Totals	128		132		260	

## CHAPTER II

### REPORT OF THE STUDY

#### I. PROCEDURE USED IN THE SURVEY

In the previous chapter an outline of the need for further study of the homework problem and a review of previous attempts to attack this all-important problem were presented. It was emphasized that a study of current school practices could be valuable. Therefore, the procedures used in this particular questionnaire study were based entirely upon obtaining a valid estimation of opinions of Ordean pupils regarding the homework policies of the faculty. No attempt was made to determine the statistical reliability or validity of the individual items in the questionnaire, but great care was taken to see that bias was eliminated, and that the results would reflect the true attitudes of the pupils. The procedures used in obtaining the sample and the conditions of giving the questionnaire, such as room conditions, time of administration, and attitudes, might affect the reliability of the instrument. Thus, it was necessary to control these conditions as much as possible.

1. Reliability of the Survey. The sampling procedures which were used have already been presented in Chapter I. A heterogeneous group, seventh through ninth grade, rather than a homogeneous group, such as only ninth grade,

was used in the survey.

In administering the questionnaire a problem existed in that the students had to be encouraged to answer the questions spontaneously and honestly. Thus, in framing the questionnaire, emphasis was placed on consideration of the respondent. Since bias and judgment affect the reliability of a measuring device, careful methods of interpreting results were followed. It is probably wise to approach the answers to a questionnaire as a skeptic. In many studies there definitely is a halo effect which must be discounted if the results are to be of value. These effects and other emotional reactions tend to color results. Therefore, the directions given to the students and the methods used in administering the form were carefully scrutinized to eliminate this factor as much as possible. The instrument was designed to measure pupil feelings and reactions more than to accumulate specific facts. It must be remembered when interpreting the results that they are student opinions only. Yet they do indicate "trouble" areas and wise school-work policies.

2. Validity of the Questionnaire. From experience in testing pupils one gains the knowledge that no matter how clear a question may appear, it may mean many different things to those who attempt to answer it. The results of any particular query are invalid if those who are questioned

interpret it in different ways. Thus, determined attempts were made to eliminate any ambiguous statements.

To validate the homework questionnaire, it was given to administrators and teachers in its earliest form, and each was asked his opinion. These people are most familiar with the policies at Ordean and might be classified as "experts" in the field. Each was asked to check for ambiguous statements by reading the questionnaire as if he or she were the student taking it. No students were used to validate the form, for it was felt that none of them should take the final form with previous notice of contents or any preconceived ideas. The "experts" who did check the form were asked to list the questions they found difficult to understand and briefly explain why. Several constructive criticisms resulted in changes so that the final form was considered to be a valid one.

Each query included in the form was checked off against each objective to see that no one objective was receiving an overload of attention while others were being neglected. The "experts" mentioned earlier were given a copy of the objectives along with the early form of the questionnaire and were asked to write in any homework questions which they would like to see included. A suggestion for better classification of high, average, and low students was obtained in this manner.

## II. THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Before giving a questionnaire it must first be determined whether the procedure used is a sound one. A questionnaire may be made to serve other than its usual purposes. It may provide extra dividends of improved feelings, self-analysis, and therapeutic outlets for the student if the procedures used in conjunction with it are carefully planned. The questionnaire was given during the pupils' activity period. Every week at Ordean one activity period is used for homeroom guidance purposes. It was felt that by giving the questionnaire during this period the students would take a more favorable attitude toward it than if a study period had been taken from them.

The pupil questionnaire was given to the entire sample at one time with no attempt made to give it to those who were absent. At no time were the students informed that one of the Ordean faculty members was giving the questionnaire, for their responses might not be as sincere if they had such information. To avoid having the instrument submitted in the name of one person, the words "sponsored by the Duluth school system" appeared on the first page. This seemingly added weight of authority might eliminate the attitude of "Who wants to know?"

Names were not obtained in the survey in order to assure students of their anonymity. This gave the distinct advantage of decreasing motivation for dishonest or evasive

answers. This fact was emphasized to students, for it could prove a very real problem in this type of attitude study.

The different groups of students received standard instructions, the most important of which were written on the face sheet of the questionnaire. Another set of instructions was made up for the teachers so that each would administer the form in a standard manner. To help the teachers in broaching the subject of a questionnaire, an announcement was made over the school public address system relating to the survey. This announcement, instructions to the teachers, and a copy of the student questionnaire are all included in the Appendix.

### III. TREATMENT OF THE FINDINGS

Twenty-nine of the thirty-two questions included in the questionnaire lent themselves to tabulation. The other three were "free answer" type questions which were included to enable the student to express recommendations for improving homework assignments. Since the subjects of the study were junior high school students, simplicity and convenience were considered of utmost importance in making up the questionnaire. Specific questions were asked since general questions often result in vague answers which are difficult to interpret.

One of the purposes of the survey was to make comparisons. Since a different number of pupils is included in

each category, all tabulations are based on a percentage evaluation. The achievement levels, sex differences, and grade levels are subdivided in each table so that comparisons can be made at a glance.

In order to compare high, average, and low students, a classification system had to be arranged. The first two questions of the survey provided a method for classifying the student into one of three groups. In order to make the "A" honor roll at Ordean the student must be outstanding scholastically, while the achievement of the student who makes the merit roll is also better than average. A copy of the qualifying requirements for honor roll students, which is included in the Appendix, will illustrate this fact. For the purposes of this survey, a student was classified as "high" if he or she had been on the merit roll or higher at least twice in the first three marking periods of the school year. Those who were on the merit roll once and no honor roll twice, or on no honor roll three times, were classified as "average" students if they answered "no" to the question, "Have you received at least one F in any of your major subjects so far this year?" A student was classified "low" only if he or she answered "yes" to this question. On the basis of this system, there were a total of 65 low, 108 average, and 87 high students included in the sample.

#### IV. ADMINISTERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The eight teachers whose aid was asked to administer the form were questioned about the attitudes of the students while they were taking the questionnaire. In all cases, except one, the students were reported to have taken a favorable attitude. The one exception occurred within a seventh grade group classified previously as being a low group. Some of these students were reportedly confused regarding what they were being asked in a few of the questions. Clarification by the teacher was necessary. This, along with the fact that seven students in this same class needed extra time to complete the questionnaire, indicated that the situation resulted mainly from the students having low reading skills rather than from ambiguity of the questions. In all other classes no such difficulties were reported.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter will present the findings of the student questionnaire which was given to the sample of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade pupils at Ordean. The questions have been grouped into ten main categories to give greater ease of interpretation. The information will be presented in the same order as the objectives are listed in Chapter I. This will insure that the purposes of the survey are adequately being met.

#### I. AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK

The first objective was to find the general reaction of the Ordean student body to the amount of work given by the faculty at present. This particular question of how much homework should be given is one which has resulted in great controversy within educational circles everywhere. A common complaint among students is that teachers do not consult each other and give tests, long assignments and so forth on different days. Do Ordean students have this problem? Table II gives the answer to this and other information.

We find that about one-half of the students take school-work home almost every school day. The percent of respondents who chose this alternative to the question, "How often

TABLE II

## PUPILS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK THEY HAVE

How often do you take home schoolwork?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

	Boys	Girls	High	Average	Low
Every school day	20.6	21.1	19.4	20.2	24.5
Almost every school day	44.3	59.4	50.1	55.0	48.1
Once or twice a week	28.2	15.6	26.1	20.9	19.3
Very seldom	6.1	3.9	3.3	3.9	8.1
Never	0.8	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Percent by Grades

	7th	8th	9th	Total
Every school day	16.5	16.4	30.4	20.9
Almost every school day	56.5	47.8	51.2	51.8
Once or twice a week	23.5	26.1	15.9	22.0
Very seldom	3.5	8.7	2.5	5.0
Never	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.3
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

About how much time do you spend completing homework?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

	Boys	Girls	High	Average	Low
Four hours or more	1.5	2.4	1.3	1.8	3.1
About three hours	3.1	4.6	0.0	7.2	3.6
About two hours	25.4	22.7	22.4	23.4	27.4
About one hour	48.5	50.8	50.6	49.3	50.6
Less than an hour	21.5	19.5	25.7	18.3	15.3
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Percent by Grades

	7th	8th	9th	Total
Four hours or more	2.3	1.1	2.4	1.9
About three hours	7.0	2.2	2.4	3.9
About two hours	22.0	27.8	22.0	24.0
About one hour	45.4	48.9	54.9	49.7
Less than an hour	23.3	20.0	18.3	20.5
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE II (continued)

How much time per school day do you think you should be asked to spend on all outside assignments?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

	Boys	Girls	High	Average	Low
Four hours or more	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.0
About three hours	6.8	3.9	1.1	8.2	6.0
About two hours	31.0	24.2	31.0	28.6	21.5
About one hour	39.4	53.9	56.3	40.1	43.6
Less than an hour	14.4	12.5	8.1	16.7	15.5
No outside assignments	7.6	4.7	2.4	5.5	13.4
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Percent by Grades

	7th	8th	9th	Total
Four hours or more	1.2	0.0	1.2	0.7
About three hours	7.0	6.5	2.5	5.4
About two hours	25.5	25.1	33.0	27.7
About one hour	47.7	51.0	40.3	46.6
Less than an hour	10.5	13.0	17.0	13.4
No outside assignments	8.1	4.4	6.0	6.2
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

do you take home schoolwork?" was 51.8 percent. Nearly half of the students who answered the questionnaire stated they worked "about an hour" on their homework. One significant fact revealed by the three questions in Table II is that a similar percentage of students answered "about an hour" when questioned about how much time they thought they should be asked to spend on outside assignments each school day. This would appear to indicate that Ordean students are generally satisfied with the amount of homework they are assigned. Surprisingly enough the survey revealed that a slightly larger percentage of students felt they were given too little homework compared to those who indicated they had too much. Nearly 30 percent of the students stated they averaged two or more hours completing homework, but almost 34 percent said they should be asked to spend two or more hours on outside assignments. A small number of students felt there should be no outside assignments. Only a few conscientious or slow workers indicated three or more hours a day were used for homework. On the basis of the information presented in Table II, it can be said that a satisfactory amount of homework is being assigned by the Ordean faculty as far as the students are concerned.

1. Comparing Boys and Girls. In comparing the responses of boys as opposed to girls, some variations did exist. Girls were found to bring schoolwork home more

often than boys. About 80 percent of the girls said they took schoolwork home every day or almost every day while only 64.9 percent of the boys indicated this was true in their case. One reason for this difference, as will be shown in a later tabulation, was that boys tended to get more of their assignments completed during school hours than did girls.

No important differences existed in the amount of time that boys spent completing their homework in comparison to time spent by girls. Approximately one-half of both groups were found to spend "about one hour". When asked, "About how much time per school day do you think you should be asked to spend on all outside assignments?", the boys' opinions seemed to vary more than those of the girls. A greater number (7.6 percent) of boys stated they wanted "no outside assignments" and 14.4 percent were for "less than an hour." Yet 38.6 percent of the boys surveyed thought they should be given at least two hours of outside work, and about the same number felt one hour per school day was enough. The girls of all three grades were more in agreement that one hour of homework was a reasonable amount to ask of them. A total of 53.9 percent favored this reply while only 28.9 percent indicated a preference for two or more hour's work. One conclusion that could be drawn from this comparison was that the boys were more in favor of increas-

ing the amount of outside classwork than the girls although the majority of both groups felt they were being asked to do about the right amount by their teachers.

2. Comparing high, average, and low students. According to information presented in Table II the low students take home schoolwork slightly more often than those classified as high students. The average students lead both these groups by a small margin in the number of times homework is taken home. It is interesting to note that only in the group designated as "high" can a student be found who never has to take home schoolwork.

The low and average students were found to spend more time completing their homework than high students. A total of 34.1 percent of low students and 32.4 percent of average students were spending at least two hours completing assignments on days they brought home work. In contrast only 23.7 percent of high pupils needed a similar amount of time. The greatest percentage of students who indicated they spent "less than an hour" doing homework were found in the high group. Probably lower reading skills and slower learning ability necessitate the additional expenditure of time by low and average students.

The opposite reaction might well be expected when the three groups were asked to express their ideas about the amount of time they think they should be asked to spend on

all outside assignments. This was found to be true in the results of this survey. A larger percentage (13.4) of the low students gave their support to having "no outside assignments" than was indicated by either of the other two groups. On the other hand a total of 33.3 percent of high students and an even greater percentage (37.7) of average pupils wanted two or more hours of outside class work. Only 27.5 percent of the lower students expressed this viewpoint.

### 3. Seventh, eighth, and ninth grade comparisons.

Ninth grade pupils were found to bring work home more often than did seventh or eighth grade students. The eighth grade pupils participating in the survey were least bothered with having to carry home books. Of the ninth grade sample, 30.4 percent found it necessary to take home assignments every school day while only about 16.5 percent of the other two grades took work home this often. When it came to expressing the actual amount of time spent completing homework, there was no large variation among the three groups.

Ninth grade students appeared more erratic in expressing their opinion as to the amount of time they should be asked to spend on outside class assignments. This grade level held a greater number of students favoring two or more hours' work, but were also in the lead in numbers of students supporting "less than an hour" and "no outside assignments". This could be due to their having more ex-

perience with homework and, thus, more definite ideas on the subject pro and con.

## II. VALUE OF HOMEWORK

Equally as controversial a subject as the amount of homework to be assigned is the question of the value of homework. Four questions dealt with the various aspects of the value of outside classwork as presently assigned. The specific purpose of this section was to learn if the benefits of assigned homework are large enough in the minds of the students to counterbalance any disadvantages. The four tables which follow shed clearer light on whether or not homework at Ordean serves a useful purpose. If it is not purposeful, it should be discontinued or else the whole program re-evaluated, for in the words of John Corbally:

The busywork philosophy is no longer valid. Idle hands are no more useless than busy hands doing work that is pointless and unproductive.<sup>12</sup>

If homework at Ordean is indicated by the students as being of value to them, then the practice should be continued and improved.

1. Is homework absolutely necessary? Only one question asked the students directly whether they felt

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<sup>12</sup>Corbally, John E. Jr., "Homework That Teaches," National Education Association Journal, November, 1953, p. 478.

homework was necessary if they were to get an adequate education. The responses are shown in Table III which follows. It shows that a great majority of the students of all three grades felt homework was of paramount importance in their preparation for the future. Three fourths of the students answering the questionnaire believed work at home to be absolutely necessary.

The boys were found to be more emphatic in supporting the value of homework in that 75.8 percent of them answered "yes" compared to 67.5 percent of the girls. This might be expected in that boys are more likely to be the job seekers of the future. In comparing high, average, and low students, only slight differences existed with the low students indicating a greater need for homework. The comparison of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades showed even smaller differences of opinion with all three groups solidly supporting the value of homework.

2. Does homework encourage students to look up "unknowns"? Some homework is merely repetitious drill of material presented in class while other assignments take students into areas for which they are not fully prepared. Yet certainly there are homework tasks which are an extension of the stimulation given in class and which students follow up with great interest. Do the students of Ordean ever find this true of their homework? A partial answer can be found in the data presented in Table IV.

TABLE III  
 ORDEAN STUDENTS' REACTIONS  
 TO WHETHER HOMEWORK IS NECESSARY

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	75.8	67.5	71.3	70.0	76.5
No	<u>24.2</u>	<u>32.5</u>	<u>28.7</u>	<u>30.0</u>	<u>23.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	72.1	70.0	73.2	71.8
No	<u>27.9</u>	<u>30.0</u>	<u>26.8</u>	<u>28.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE IV  
 ORDEAN PUPILS' REACTIONS  
 TO WHETHER HOMEWORK ENCOURAGES  
 THEM TO LOOK UP UNKNOWNNS

<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>					
<u>Response</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	45.5	44.5	54.0	39.8	40.1
No	<u>54.5</u>	<u>55.5</u>	<u>46.0</u>	<u>60.2</u>	<u>59.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Percent by Grades</u>					
<u>Response</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Yes	62.8	35.9	36.5	45.0	
No	<u>37.2</u>	<u>64.1</u>	<u>63.5</u>	<u>55.0</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Taking into account the entire sample of the survey, more students were found to be uninspired by homework than those who were inspired. Fifty-five percent of the 260 pupils answering the questionnaire said "no" to the question of whether or not homework encourages them to seek out information even though it is not required for the assignment, while the remaining 45 percent answered "yes". Boys and girls both were in very close agreement with these percentages. However an indication that homework is of greater benefit to high students than to low or average students is readily seen from Table IV. Only in the high classification is there found a greater percentage of students answering "yes". The 54.0 percent of high students indicating encouragement from schoolwork to look up unknowns substantially outranks the respective 39.8 and 40.1 percentages of the average and low students. Looking solely from this aspect of determining the value of homework at Ordean, it would appear that the high students are reaping greater profits.

Significant differences also exist when comparing seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students. Here only the seventh grade pupils had a majority answering "yes". A total of 62.8 percent of seventh graders were inspired to seek out additional information while the percentages for the eighth and ninth grades were only 35.9 and 36.5 respectively. This might be the result of a greater enthusiasm

for school among seventh grade pupils. A new situation is presented them in their move from an elementary school with one teacher all day to the junior high with a different teacher for each subject. Another possibility is that seventh grade teachers are presenting their pupils with more challenging homework situations than are the teachers of the eighth or ninth grades.

3. Does homework have a bearing on grades received?

Is there a relationship between the amount of time a pupil spends in home study and his achievement as measured by marks? If they are related, then homework might be said to be of value. The percent of pupil responses to the question connecting homework with grades received is presented in Table V.

The homework that students did in conjunction with their regular class study was, in the opinion of the majority (75.6 percent), influential in determining their marks. The remaining one-fourth of the students felt that homework was of no help in this respect. Since grades can be taken to measure to some degree the achievement and progress of each student, an argument for the continuation of assigned homework is presented.

Approximately the same ratios are observed when comparing boys with girls. Both sexes are in close agreement favoring homework. In comparing high and low students it

TABLE V  
 RESPONSES OF ORDEAN STUDENTS  
 AS TO WHETHER THE AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK  
 THEY DO HAS A BEARING ON THEIR MARKS

<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>					
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	75.0	74.2	71.0	73.9	79.4
No	<u>25.0</u>	<u>25.8</u>	<u>29.0</u>	<u>26.1</u>	<u>20.6</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Percent by Grades</u>					
<u>Responses</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Yes	77.9	76.1	69.5	75.6	
No	<u>22.1</u>	<u>23.9</u>	<u>30.5</u>	<u>25.4</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

was found that 8.4 percent more of the low students felt homework had an effect on their marks than did the high students.

On the basis of the information in Table V, the conclusion was reached that three out of every four Ordean students, regardless of ability, sex, or grade level, agreed that the grades they receive from the faculty have a direct relationship to the amount of homework they complete. Here again, homework is found to be of value.

4. How strong is the support of homework among Ordean students? The last "alternative" question was one that was designed to measure the relative support or opposition to homework by the pupils. The students were asked to choose from four alternatives the one statement with which they came the closest to agreeing. The four choices are as follows: (1) Ordean students would be better off with no homework at all; (2) Although we need homework at Ordean, assignments do more harm than good the way they are given now; (3) While some assignments are not important to learning, on the whole assignments at Ordean are doing more good than harm; (4) Homework assignments at Ordean have been of value in helping me gain the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that I will need. Those who selected the fourth alternative are definitely pro-homework in attitude and support

the continued existence of outside schoolwork. The respondents who picked the first alternative are also decisive and most definite in their opposition to homework. The individuals who chose the middle two responses imply indecision about favoring homework. In the second choice, the balance of the argument is anti-homework, while in the third choice, it is pro-homework. The responses to this question were used to further determine the worth of homework to Ordean students. The results are tabulated in Table VI.

A quick glance at the table reveals that the value of homework is again upheld by a majority of the student body. This is encouraging, for consistent results mean greater reliability of the measuring device. In this instance 45.5 percent of the sample indicated definite support of homework by selecting the fourth alternative. Another 40 percent of the students showed they were basically pro-homework by choosing the third alternative which states that homework does more good than harm.

No significant differences are found in the choices of boys and girls. Both are greatly in favor of the third and fourth alternatives expressing pro-homework attitudes.

The percentages of average and low students who oppose homework are slightly more than those of high students, but all three classifications have a majority expressing favorable homework attitudes. As expected the low students

TABLE VI

ORDEAN STUDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING  
SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO HOMEWORK

With which statement do you come closest to agreeing?

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Better off with no homework	5.5	6.4	2.4	5.9	11.3
Does more harm than good	8.6	8.8	4.3	10.7	11.6
Does more good than harm	40.6	39.2	45.6	38.0	34.4
Of value for skills etc.	<u>45.3</u>	<u>45.6</u>	<u>47.7</u>	<u>45.4</u>	<u>42.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Better off with no homework	2.4	7.6	7.5	5.9
Does more harm than good	6.0	14.3	5.0	8.6
Does more good than harm	42.2	37.4	40.6	40.0
Of value for skills etc.	<u>49.9</u>	<u>40.7</u>	<u>46.9</u>	<u>45.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

were found to lead in percentages showing an opinion of "Ordean students would be better off with no homework." Yet only 11.3 percent of the low students held this opinion while another 11.6 percent felt "homework does more harm than good."

In comparing the figures by grades, the eighth graders were slightly more anti-homework than the other two grades. Only "token" percentages of seventh and ninth grade pupils were found to select the anti-homework alternatives. Totals of 91.6, 78.1, 87.5 percent of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students respectively lent their strength to the statement, "To have survived all these years despite the pressures of some teachers against it, homework must have some influential friends in court, and it does."<sup>13</sup> The students of Ordean have apparently lined up on the side of homework.

The value of home study has been supported most convincingly by the students of Ordean in three out of the four questions reviewed in this section. In the opinion of the students, compulsory homework does result in improved academic accomplishments and other benefits. A strong argument has been presented to justify the retention of home study

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<sup>13</sup>Fine, Benjamin, op. cit., p. 12.

assignments.

### III. HOMEWORK AND SCHOOL SUBJECTS

The third objective of the survey, to get student opinion of whether or not homework creates interest to look up unknowns, has already been discussed in connection with the value of homework.

Thus, the next problem was to find out if homework is "accepted" in some subjects and not in others. Two questions were asked the pupils in order to obtain this information. In one the student was asked to pick the major subject in which he felt homework was most important for understanding and learning the class material. In the other the student was to name the major subject in which he felt homework was most important for understanding and learning the class material. In the other the student was to name the major subject in which he felt homework was least important. Four major subjects were listed as alternatives with a fifth category "other". It should be mentioned in advance that the author of this study feels the validity of both questions was impaired to a certain extent by inclusion of the fifth alternative "other". This was especially true in the case of naming the subject considered least important. Too many students evidently took the questions to mean all subjects rather than major subjects. A large

enough number listed minor subjects like home economics, music, and shop so that the results were not as satisfactory as had been hoped. Nevertheless, if this fact is kept in mind, some conclusions can be drawn. The findings of the two queries are presented in Table VII and Table VIII.

It is interesting to note that the greatest percentages of the entire sample list mathematics and science as the subjects where homework is most important. This might be due in part to the trend of the times with the recent publicity given both of these subjects because of international competition to launch rockets and satellites into space. Regardless of the motivation, however, the fact that 30.0 percent of all students chose mathematics and 27.4 percent chose science should not be cast aside. Each of these substantially outranked the percentages for English, social studies and others to warrant the conclusion that at the present time students feel homework in these two subjects is most vital.

Boys and girls both were found to be in agreement with the percentages just cited for the total sample. The only real variation occurred in the choice of social studies homework which was considered necessary by 20.3 percent of the girls and only 12.9 percent of the boys.

The survey revealed that low students had the greatest amount of uncertainty in choosing a subject in which they

TABLE VII

SUBJECT IN WHICH HOMEWORK IS CONSIDERED  
MOST IMPORTANT BY CRDEAN STUDENTS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
English	17.4	18.0	8.8	21.3	22.5
Mathematics	30.3	29.7	29.0	33.1	27.6
Science	28.8	25.7	35.4	20.9	24.9
Social Studies	12.9	20.3	12.4	22.0	12.6
Others	<u>10.6</u>	<u>6.3</u>	<u>14.4</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>12.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
English	18.6	15.2	19.5	17.7
Mathematics	23.3	22.8	45.1	30.0
Science	41.9	34.9	3.7	27.4
Social Studies	8.1	22.8	18.3	16.5
Others	<u>8.1</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>13.4</u>	<u>8.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

considered homework most important. They probably are not quite as objective in their thinking in that they must have had unpleasant experiences in at least one of their major subjects which they failed. This failure could cause them to react in either of two ways: to support homework in that particular subject for their greater understanding or to reject homework in that class because of intense dislike for the material covered. It is also interesting to note that only 8.8 percent of the high students found homework most important in English while 21.3 percent of the average and 22.5 percent of the low students found this true.

By far the most significant difference discovered in comparing seventh, eighth, and ninth graders occurred in the choices of mathematics and science as the subjects where homework is most needed. A total of 45.1 percent of the ninth grade students selected mathematics while only 23.3 percent of the seventh and 22.8 percent of the eighth grade students made this selection. This undoubtedly is due to the fact that the majority of ninth grade students are taking algebra while seventh and eighth grade mathematics is, in general, an extension of that learned in the primary grades. Regarding the allied subject of science, the direction of choice was just the opposite. Only 3.7 percent of the ninth graders chose science whereas 41.9 percent of the seventh and 34.9 percent of the eighth grade students made science their choice. An explanation of the Ordean

curriculum will explain this situation. Science is taken for only one semester in the ninth grade. Therefore, some of the ninth graders had not had science yet when the questionnaire was given and certainly this would influence their answers. On the other hand science for seventh graders might be considered a relatively "new" subject in that it is usually not stressed in the lower grades.

The results presented in Table VIII, which deals with subjects in which homework is considered least necessary, are not nearly as comparable as those in Table VII due to the high percentages listed under the alternative "other" in all subdivisions. Attention should be called to the fact though, that results are again consistent at least in that mathematics and science had the lowest total percentages as being the subjects in which students found homework least important. If these subjects had been given majorities in this section after being selected as the most important homework subjects earlier, the results could certainly be questioned. As it stands the author believes no valid conclusions can be drawn from Table VIII due to the ambiguity of what constitutes a major subject. Of the four major subjects that were listed as alternatives as being least important for homework assignments, social studies and English were selected by greater numbers in six of the nine subdivisions. Whether any conclusions can be

TABLE VIII

SUBJECT IN WHICH HOMEWORK IS CONSIDERED  
LEAST IMPORTANT BY ORDEAN STUDENTS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
English	21.2	20.3	24.2	20.4	16.8
Mathematics	16.7	21.9	21.2	20.4	13.1
Science	9.1	25.0	9.3	19.4	25.4
Social Studies	29.5	16.4	26.2	21.4	20.8
Others	<u>23.5</u>	<u>16.4</u>	<u>19.1</u>	<u>18.4</u>	<u>23.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
English	14.0	26.1	22.0	20.9
Mathematics	19.8	19.5	18.3	19.2
Science	19.8	12.0	19.5	16.9
Social Studies	16.3	26.1	26.8	23.0
Others	<u>30.2</u>	<u>16.3</u>	<u>13.4</u>	<u>20.0</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

formulated from this fact is questionable.

#### IV. PUNISHMENT AND HOMEWORK

One of the questions which concerns teachers relates to the use of extra assignments as disciplinary measure. Many teachers will resort to the "500 word report" or "work the following 50 problems" type of punishment for classroom misdemeanors or for outright insubordination. Some educators say this is not the right approach in that additional assignments given as punishment only cause further resentment for the regular homework. Others state that this is a good method since the student is not learning from class study, for he is busy misbehaving and, therefore, he may learn something from the extra assignment. Probably the best way to get an answer to this is to learn if the students themselves condone such methods of punishment. Two questions were asked the students in connection with punishment and homework. One of these was, "Should additional assignments be given to students as punishment?" The students were then asked to explain briefly why they thought so or why not. Table IX, which follows, tabulates the replies to this question from Ordean students.

Approximately two-thirds of the 260 students who answered the questionnaire were of the opinion that homework should not be given as punishment. The remaining one third

TABLE IX  
 REACTIONS OF ORDEAN STUDENTS  
 TO GIVING EXTRA HOMEWORK AS PUNISHMENT

<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades.</u>					
<u>Response</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	34.1	33.1	30.9	34.8	35.6
No	<u>65.9</u>	<u>66.9</u>	<u>69.1</u>	<u>65.2</u>	<u>64.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Percent by Grades</u>					
<u>Response</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Yes	43.0	28.5	29.2	33.5	
No	<u>57.0</u>	<u>71.5</u>	<u>70.8</u>	<u>66.5</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

felt it should. About the same ratio is observed when comparing boys against girls. The high students "shout down" the use of extra assignments a little more emphatically than do the others although each classification is close to the two thirds ratio observed for the total sample. Only when comparing by grade levels is a significant variance of opinion noted. The largest percentage of "yes" answers are found in the seventh grade where 43 percent felt homework makes a good punishment and 57 percent say "no". The eighth and ninth grade students are definitely against the practice with 71.5 and 70.8 percent respectively voting "no". Therefore it seems safe to conclude that in the minds of the student body extra assignments should not be given as a disciplinary measure. Here are some of the reasons given by students in their own words:

1. "If students have other homework, they couldn't get it done, and regular homework is more important."
2. "It makes students think all homework is punishment."
3. "If the teacher gives extra homework, the students begin to hate that subject and will not like the required work."
4. "The teacher should give a bad conduct mark instead, not work the student may not know how to do anyway."
5. "Those who get the extra work are usually the kind who won't do it anyway."
6. "Students can always get help on extra homework and not do it themselves."
7. "I don't think it will teach the student not to do it again."
8. "Teachers want us to understand and like a subject. You're not going to like a subject if you feel the work is going to be used as a punishment."

The one third of the students who supported the use of extra schoolwork for those who misbehave in class also had their reasons. Some typical replies for using extra assignments as punishment were:

1. "The punishment was probably given for fooling around, and extra work will help him learn what the class is studying."
2. "The student will have respect for the teacher and know she means business after that."
3. "Those who don't behave should have more work than others."
4. "Extra homework might improve his grades."
5. "No one likes extra homework so they won't misbehave again."

The other question involving the use of punishment was, "Should a student be compelled by parents or teachers into completing homework by threatening punishment (taking away privileges) if the assignment is not done?" Here again a controversy arises, for some educators say a student should learn to take personal responsibility for the completion of tasks without the use of force or cajoling, while others advocate the use of punishment on the grounds that a student does not always realize what is best for him and must be forced into completing seemingly unnecessary tasks. Some claim that students are just lazy and need some prodding. Once again it might be wise to examine the opinions of the pupils regarding this aspect of punishment and homework. Table X presents these findings.

The majority of the students again rejected the use

TABLE X

OPINIONS OF ORDEAN STUDENTS REGARDING  
THE USE OF FORCE BY PARENTS OR TEACHERS  
TO GET COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

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<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>					
<u>Response</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	33.3	24.2	27.0	25.6	35.6
No	64.4	68.0	65.1	70.7	61.2
Other	<u>2.3</u>	<u>7.8</u>	<u>7.9</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Percent by Grades</u>				
<u>Response</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	34.9	28.3	23.2	28.8
No	57.0	67.4	74.4	66.2
Other	<u>8.1</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>5.0</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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of force regarding homework in that 66.2 percent of the total sample said "no" and only 28.8 percent favored forcing completion of homework assignments. The boys seemed slightly more in favor of harsh measures than the girls although the majority of both sexes felt that the threat of punishment should not be used. Some of the students who chose the third alternative of "other" explained that it was all right for parents to take away privileges, but teachers should not. Others explained their answers would vary depending on the situation.

The low students, who, no doubt, have to bear the greatest share of such prodding, are surprisingly more in favor of using punishment to get assignments completed than are high or average students. Table X reveals that 35.6 percent of the 65 pupils who had failed at least one subject answered "yes" to the use of force. This compares with 25.6 percent of average students and 27.0 percent of high students who favored threats to insure completion of work. Evidently the low students more often accept the use of some type of pressure to get their homework done since they are most likely to become disinterested in a subject due to their slower learning ability. If they have sole responsibility to see that schoolwork is completed, the tendency to "get by with the least amount of work" becomes too strong. Yet, as was indicated earlier the low students in

particular realize the amount of homework they do has a bearing on their grades so they may feel the threat of punishment is needed in order to get the necessary work completed.

Significant differences are also seen in the tabulation of the percentages by grades. The taking away of privileges would be considered a satisfactory "motivation" device by 34.9 percent of the seventh graders whereas only 28.3 percent of the eighth and 23.2 percent of the ninth grade pupils would accept this as a wise method. With 74.4 percent answering "no," the ninth grade pupils established themselves as the group which most vigorously opposes the use of force by parents or teachers if assignments are not being done. This could well be due to the fact that they are rapidly becoming more independent and thus feel they are able to take more responsibility on themselves.

The survey showed that in the opinion of the pupils punishment should not be used to force completion of homework, nor should homework itself be used as a punishment. This does not necessarily mean that punishment should never be used. In fact in some cases it might well be the accepted procedure. The fact that there is a substantial number answering "yes" to both questions indicates that some students will respond to the use of force and extra assignments. This survey further emphasizes that students

are individuals and must be treated as such. What will work with one will not always work with another. Still, it is beneficial for any teacher to know what the majority opinion is before deciding on homework policies.

#### V. PARENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE AMOUNT AND VALUE OF HOMEWORK

Homework is one message from the school that is heard and felt in every home. In fact some schools have as their chief purpose in giving homework the idea of creating a closer bond between the home and the school. Homework is one way to show what is being taught. The most elaborate public relations program will fall short as long as parents feel resentment toward the school's homework policy or lack of one. Statements like the following can readily be found in articles concerning homework.

Homework is a matter of great concern to parents and is very much on their minds. This fact became amply evident in a recent study in which parents in 900 homes were asked . . . , "What would you like to know about your child's school?" Almost without exception homework was one of the items of which parents spoke.<sup>14</sup>

If parents are so concerned about the homework policies of the school, then teachers should be interested in what

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<sup>14</sup>Stout, Irving, and Langdon, Grade and others, "Homework," National Education Association Journal, September 1957, p. 370.

parents think of the homework their children are given. For this reason an objective of this survey was to gain some insight into what the pupils believe is their parents' opinion regarding the amount and value of homework that is assigned at Ordean Junior High School. The responses concerning the amount are tabulated in Table XI and those concerning value in Table XII.

The data in Table XI show that most parents (51.2 percent) have given their children the impression that they are being given the right amount of homework. The next largest percentage of parents, (26.2 percent) are those expressing the opinion that too little homework is given their sons and daughters. This leaves only 22.6 percent for the other three alternatives. These percentages might be misleading to a certain extent. Since these represent pupils' thoughts about their parents' opinions and not necessarily the actual ideas of the parents, conclusions should not be drawn too hastily. One possible explanation for the high percentage for "the right amount of homework" could be that some parents have made no comment on the subject and so the students feel they probably approve of the present load. This might not be true in all cases. However, it should be pointed out that in both tables the fifth alternative "other" did eliminate some of this error since most who chose it commented, "They have never expressed

TABLE XI

PARENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE AMOUNT  
OF HOMEWORK GIVEN ORDEAN STUDENTS

<u>Parents' Opinion</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Too much homework	6.9	10.9	6.7	10.9	8.5
Too little homework	34.8	17.2	20.2	27.1	33.6
Right amount of homework	45.4	57.0	61.4	44.2	46.6
Have no homework	1.5	5.5	5.8	2.8	2.0
Other	<u>11.4</u>	<u>9.4</u>	<u>5.9</u>	<u>15.0</u>	<u>9.3</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

  

<u>Parents' Opinion</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Too much homework	10.5	7.6	8.5	8.9
Too little homework	24.4	27.2	26.8	26.2
Right amount of homework	55.8	48.9	48.8	51.2
Have no homework	3.5	2.2	4.9	3.4
Other	<u>5.8</u>	<u>14.1</u>	<u>11.0</u>	<u>10.3</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

themselves." Also some parents may tell their children they have the right amount or too little homework in order to keep from adding further discouragement to the situation, when actually they sympathize and feel he is given too much work. These comments are also applicable to the information presented in Table XII on the value of homework.

It is important nevertheless, to know what students believe to be the attitude of their parents. Psychologically this has an important bearing on how the students themselves approach their assignments. In this sense the information in Tables XI and XII is highly usable.

The amount of homework that the boys brought home was regarded as "too little" by their parents in 34.8 percent of the cases. This was true for only 17.2 percent of the girls. It should be kept in mind that earlier it was learned that boys bring home schoolwork less often than girls, which probably accounts for the variation in their parents' opinions.

An interesting fact revealed by Table XI is that parents of high students gave the impression to their children that no homework was best more often than did parents of low students although this difference was small. Approximately 13 percent more of the low students' parents felt their children had "too little homework" compared to those of high students. This difference is all the more surprising when you consider that earlier in the survey it was

TABLE XII

PARENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE VALUE  
OF HOMEWORK GIVEN ORDEAN STUDENTS

<u>Parents' Opinion</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
It is very important	63.4	61.7	61.1	64.9	60.3
Some is important	22.9	28.1	25.1	27.7	22.0
Do it only for marks	5.4	3.9	3.4	4.6	7.2
Not important	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.9	1.2
Other	<u>7.6</u>	<u>5.5</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>9.3</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Parents' Opinion</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
It is very important	67.4	59.9	59.8	62.3
Some is important	24.4	26.1	25.6	25.4
Do it only for marks	3.5	6.5	4.9	5.0
Not important	0.0	1.0	1.2	0.8
Other	<u>4.7</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>8.5</u>	<u>6.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

found that low students take schoolwork home more often and also work on it longer than do high students. A reasonable explanation might be that parents of low students feel that if more homework was required of their children their grades might improve.

No significant differences are noted in comparing seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students; all three groups reported (by a wide majority) that parents felt they had the right amount of homework.

Table XII, which gives the students' view of their parents' opinions regarding the value of homework, shows that the students are not the only ones who believe homework is important. In fact the students' opinions may well be based on the attitudes of their parents. If this is true, the homes of the majority of the pupils at Ordean are a valuable aid to the educational objectives of the school, for an overwhelming 62.3 percent of the students surveyed reported the attitude of their parents to be, "Homework is very important." Along with the 25.4 percent who said, "A part of the homework is important, but not all of it," this leaves only a small number who consider homework of no importance. This weighting of opinion to the pro-homework side of the argument regarding its value is found throughout each of the subdivisions in Table XII. The only conclusion that can be reached is that the parents of Ordean students strongly support the value of homework when

it comes to conveying opinions to their offspring. Whether or not this is true in actuality is beyond the scope of this survey, for it would necessitate a parent questionnaire.

VI. STUDENT BEHAVIOR WHEN TAXED BY THE AMOUNT  
AND DIFFICULTY OF ASSIGNMENTS OR BY  
OUTSIDE TEMPTATIONS

This section will report the findings of three questions which were used to study student behavior in situations where they are taxed by the amount of homework, the difficulty of assignments, and by outside temptations.

1. Amount of homework. It has already been reported that most of the students think they have the right amount of homework. However, it is doubtless true that there are some days when schoolwork becomes burdensome due to the fact that two or more teachers assign heavy loads on exactly the same day. Under such a situation how conscientious are Ordean students? The reader is referred to Table XIII.

Over all the students can be considered fairly conscientious as far as homework is concerned, for 56.6 percent stated they would complete all the homework even though it was excessive. The figure substantially outranked the 22.4 percent who said they would "do all I can that night and hand the others in late." Both of these alternatives far outdistanced the remaining five less desirable choices.

TABLE XIII  
 CRDEAN STUDENT BEHAVIOR WHEN GIVEN  
 TOO MUCH HOMEWORK AT ONE TIME

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Complete it all	53.8	59.3	65.3	59.9	40.7
Do all I can--rest late	25.7	18.7	16.4	22.5	29.7
Do all I can--rest undone	9.1	5.5	5.8	4.7	13.7
Work smaller part of each	2.3	0.8	0.0	1.8	2.4
Don't do any of it	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Do all I can--copy rest	5.3	5.5	1.3	6.6	9.4
Other	<u>3.0</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<u>2.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Complete it all	64.0	53.4	52.5	56.6
Do all I can--rest late	16.3	26.0	24.4	22.4
Do all I can--rest undone	5.8	8.7	7.3	7.4
Work smaller part of each	0.0	2.2	2.4	1.4
Don't do any of it	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.3
Do all I can--copy rest	2.3	4.3	9.8	5.3
Other	<u>11.6</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>6.6</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to information gained, girls indicated that they complete their homework slightly more often than the boys. The boys were more in favor of doing all they could of the excessive homework and then handing the rest in late or leaving it undone.

Although all three groups had high majorities who said they would complete their homework even when it was considered too much for one night, a "key to success" is noticed when comparing the reactions of high, average and low students. The 65.3 percent of the high students who would "complete it all" was the highest percentage for any of the subdivisions tabulated in Table XIII. The low students had the lowest percentage (40.7) answering with this alternative. Also, among the choices that might be considered as undesirable behavior, the low students recorded the highest percentages. For example, only in the low classification was there found the reaction, "I don't do any of it." Those who chose "other" as an alternative usually commented that they were not faced with this problem.

By the inclusion of this seventh alternative, the validity of the question is increased in that those students who do not have the problem of too much homework on any one night were given an opening and were not forced into choosing what they might do in such a case. If they were forced into a decision, this would color the results, for human nature would probably lead most into saying, "I would

complete it all" especially when the problem is rarely faced. In fact this latter possibility cannot be discounted completely even with the alternative "other" included.

More of the seventh grade pupils said they would complete all the work than did eighth or ninth graders. The 64 percent choosing this response was almost as great as that given by the high students previously mentioned. Nearly ten percent of the ninth graders indicated they would "do all I can and finish by copying someone else's work." This was the high percentage figure for this alternative among the nine classifications. It might be well to keep this fact in mind, for later in the study student behavior as far as copying homework is concerned will be examined.

2. Difficulty of homework. The students were also asked, "If any homework gets too hard for you, what do you do?" The alternatives listed and the percentages for each are found in Table XIV.

There is no question about what the majority of students in this survey do when confronted with this problem. A glance at Table XIV shows that 70.8 percent claim, "I ask my parents (brothers or sisters) to help me understand it." This becomes one of the most significant findings of the survey, for it helps refute the often made argument against homework--that many students get parents to actually

TABLE XIV

ORDEAN STUDENT BEHAVIOR WHEN  
ASSIGNMENTS ARE TOO DIFFICULT

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Ask parents to do it	2.3	0.8	0.0	2.9	1.2
Ask help to understand	70.5	71.1	79.7	67.3	64.6
Wait and ask teacher	13.6	10.9	13.6	13.3	9.7
Call a friend	4.5	10.2	6.7	7.4	8.5
Copy someone else's work	1.5	3.1	0.0	2.9	4.1
Don't do it	3.8	3.1	0.0	3.5	7.4
Other	<u>3.8</u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>4.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ask parents to do it	0.0	2.2	2.4	1.5
Ask help to understand	87.2	71.8	52.4	70.8
Wait and ask teacher	2.3	8.7	26.8	12.3
Call a friend	5.8	8.7	7.3	7.3
Copy someone else's work	1.2	3.3	2.4	2.3
Don't do it	1.2	4.3	4.9	3.4
Other	<u>2.3</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>3.8</u>	<u>2.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

do the work for them. Only 1.5 percent of the students queried resort to this, even when the assignments are difficult.

The reactions of boys and girls are not much different when taxed by a difficult assignment. The majority of both sexes ask their parents to help them understand it, but girls will more often call a friend who knows how to do the work than will boys.

As might be expected, the high students were found to behave in a more satisfactory manner than the average or low students. Most of the high students would ask their parents to explain the difficult assignment or else wait and ask their teachers the next day. The percentage of average and low students who chose these courses of action were considerably below the 93.3 percent of high students. Only in average and low classifications are pupils found who say they would copy someone else's work or just wouldn't do the difficult assignment.

Table XIV reveals that only in two respects do seventh, eighth, and ninth graders differ to any great extent. Most of the seventh grade pupils do not hesitate to ask parents for help. In fact 87.2 percent of them chose this alternative. This was considerably more than the 71.8 and 52.4 percents for the eighth and ninth grades respectively. Since the ninth grade total is so low in comparison to the others,

what method does appeal to pupils of this age level? Table XIV gives the answer in the 26.8 percent who said they would wait until the next day and ask the teacher. The reason for greater reluctance among ninth grade pupils to consult parents for help might be two fold: (1) they are reaching the age when they seek more independence, or (2) parents and others may not be as helpful in some subjects like Latin and algebra which are part of the ninth grade curriculum.

3. Outside temptations. Although there are a number of temptations that could affect the completion of homework, it was decided to get only a single indication of student behavior in this respect by confining the study to radio or television programs, which lure a student from homework. It should be remembered that the study is limited in this manner, for under some different temptations, a student might react in another way. The students of Ordean were asked what they would do if their favorite radio or television program were on, and they had homework to complete. Their responses are presented in Table XV.

Most of the students taking part in the survey stated they would do the schoolwork either before or after the program. This was probably to be expected in view of the tone of previous responses. However, an inference that completion of homework is considered more important than

TABLE XV

## ORDEAN STUDENT BEHAVIOR WHEN AN OUTSIDE TEMPTATION IS PRESENTED

What would you do if your favorite program was on radio or TV and you had homework to do?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Listen and forget homework	6.8	0.8	1.1	2.1	9.6
Do homework after	25.0	24.2	28.6	24.8	20.7
Complete homework before	31.0	41.4	38.2	35.0	34.8
Do homework--forget program	7.6	4.7	2.4	10.9	2.9
Parents force homework	16.7	14.1	12.4	13.6	22.6
Work and watch at same time	9.1	14.8	13.7	12.7	7.7
Other	<u>3.8</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>0.9</u>	<u>1.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Student Behavior</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Listen and forget homework	0.0	7.6	3.7	3.8
Do homework after	19.8	26.0	28.0	24.6
Complete homework before	40.7	38.1	29.3	36.2
Do homework--forget program	8.1	2.3	7.3	6.2
Parents force homework	18.6	13.0	14.6	15.4
Work and watch at same time	10.5	12.0	13.4	11.9
Other	<u>2.3</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>1.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

seeing the program might be drawn from the 36.2 percent who said they would arrange to get their work done before the program started. Approximately one fourth of the students considered the entertainment more important than completion of homework, for they replied they would first watch the program and then finish their work. Only 3.8 percent of all students said they would watch the program and forget about the homework, indicating that the other 96.2 percent would, in some manner, get their homework ready to turn in the next day.

In comparing boys and girls, more boys claimed they would watch the program and forget their work, but they also led the girls in stating they would do their homework and forget about the program entirely. About 10 percent more girls than boys said they would do the work before the program started.

Apparently the parents of low students kept a tighter rein on their children, for 32.6 percent of the 65 pupils who had failed at least one subject selected the alternative, "My parents would make me finish my homework before I could watch or listen." Only 12.4 percent of the high students said this was true in their case. As might be expected a greater percentage of low students said they would forget their assignment and watch the program.

Table XV shows that most seventh and eighth graders will get their schoolwork completed before favorite programs come on the air, whereas ninth grade students are

about evenly divided between doing it before or afterwards. This could be caused by the ninth grade pupil having an opportunity to stay up longer since he is older. It should be noted that none of the 86 seventh grade pupils said they would forget about their homework. Also their parents would insist they complete their work more often than eighth or ninth grade parents.

## VII. PUPIL STUDY HABITS

In working out a homework policy for a school or for an individual teacher, the fact must be kept in mind that some students do not have an environment suitable for study at home. According to the claims of those who believe in outside assignments, homework can broaden a student's experience, extend knowledge, develop independent thinking and good work habits, and strengthen skills in the fundamentals. Yet they can do all these things only if the conditions are right. Therefore, an adequate survey of the homework problem should include a look into some of the study habits of the students. Four questions of the survey were used to provide this information.

### 1. Amount of assignments completed during school hours.

The first bit of information that would help a teacher in formulating assignment policies was provided by including this query: "About how much of all your outside class

assignments do you get completed during school hours?" The answer to this is important because many educators who advocate the overthrow of homework state that schoolwork should be done in school and not extended outside. Those who support homework generally reply that there is too much to do and too little time in school to do it. The results, which are given in Table XVI, may shed further light on the problem as far as Ordean is concerned.

No doubt one of the reasons why most students of Ordean feel they have about the right amount of homework as reported earlier is that a large percentage (39.6 percent) of them get most of their outside assignments completed during school hours. However, substantial percentages of 29.7 and 24.2 were observed for completing in school "about one half" and "very little" homework respectively. The low students might be expected to be the ones increasing these last two figures, but Table XVI shows that the high and average students contribute about an equal amount of pupils who get only a small part of their work completed in school. The figures for the three achievement classifications do not vary to any large extent except for the 48.8 percent of high students who get most of their assignments completed at school. Apparently they are either faster workers or make better use of their time than low and average students.

TABLE XVI

EXTENT OF ASSIGNMENTS COMPLETED  
DURING SCHOOL HOURS

	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
All of them	5.3	2.4	4.8	4.5	1.2
Most of them	44.7	34.4	48.8	35.2	35.4
About one-half	22.0	37.5	21.2	34.1	31.1
Very little	25.8	22.7	22.8	24.5	27.8
None	<u>2.2</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>4.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	<u>Percent by Grades</u>				
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>	
All of them	4.7	3.3	3.7	3.8	
Most of them	46.5	37.0	35.4	39.6	
About one-half	30.2	33.7	24.4	29.7	
Very little	15.1	23.8	34.1	24.2	
None	<u>3.5</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>2.7</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

The boys of Ordean get more of their outside class assignments completed during school hours than do the girls. Exactly one-half of all boys get most or all of their homework completed in school while this held true for only 36.8 percent of the girls in the survey.

A surprising comparison turns up when observing the percentages by grade levels. A total of 81.4 percent of the seventh graders and 74.0 percent of the eighth grade students completed one half or more of their assignments in school while only 63.5 percent of the ninth grade pupils stated this to be true. In fact those who said they got very little homework done at school were most often found to be ninth graders. This situation exists in spite of the fact that when asked, "Do you have a regular one hour study period in school?", many of the ninth grade students answered "Yes", but none of the seventh or eighth graders were found to have study periods. These facts can only mean that seventh and eighth grade students make wiser use of their class study time and have better study habits, or else ninth grade pupils are assigned heavier loads of schoolwork. Both of these may be true to a certain extent, and it helps to explain why substantially more ninth grade students reported earlier that they had to bring schoolwork home every school day.

2. Time when assignments are done. To get a closer

look at pupil study habits, the students were asked the question, "At what time do you usually do the major part of your outside class assignments?" The object was to get some idea of what part of the student's "free" time the homework assignments were depriving him. This is relevant, for one of the criticisms of homework is that it takes sleep or family time away from the students. The alternatives included with this question, and the percent of students favoring each choice are shown in Table XVII.

A little less than one half of Ordean Junior High School students do their homework soon after supper, and another one fourth do it immediately after school. This indicates that the majority of pupils have good study habits in this respect. Only small percentages of students are found who study after nine o'clock, or who let the major part of their work go until just before classes start in the morning. Only three students out of the 260 in the sample said they didn't bother with assignments. They were in the low classification of students and all were boys. Most of those who selected "other" as an alternative commented that the time they did their work varied from day to day, which means they have rather erratic study habits. It can be pointed out that the low students and the ninth graders had the highest percentages for this alternative.

The differences in study times between boys and girls

TABLE XVII

TIME WHEN ORDEAN STUDENTS COMPLETE  
THE MAJOR PART OF THEIR OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Time</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
During a study period	15.9	11.7	16.9	13.5	11.3
Immediately after school	19.7	27.3	22.1	23.3	25.0
Soon after supper	42.4	50.0	45.3	49.8	41.7
After 9:00	3.8	1.6	1.1	2.8	3.6
Before classes start	9.1	7.8	12.2	7.8	4.8
Don't bother with them	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1
Other	<u>6.8</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>9.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Time</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
During a study period	9.3	8.7	24.4	13.8
Immediately after school	23.3	26.1	20.7	23.5
Soon after supper	53.5	48.9	35.4	46.3
After 9:00	1.2	3.3	3.7	2.7
Before classes start	11.5	9.8	3.6	8.4
Don't bother with them	0.0	2.2	1.2	1.1
Other	<u>1.2</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>11.0</u>	<u>4.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

do not vary much. The largest percentages in all categories are found to do the major share of their work soon after supper, which covered the time between six and nine o'clock. The noticeable exception to this comes at the ninth grade level where a much lower percent (35.4) chose this alternative. The loss here is taken up by the large percentage (24.4) who did most of their work during a study period in school. The seventh and eighth grade students did more of their work before classes started in the morning, evidently referring to the forty minute activity period each day.

3. Room in which homework is usually done. To discover the conditions under which the majority of Ordean students must study, they were asked in which room they usually did their homework. Only twelve of the 260 pupils in the survey had what could be called ideal study conditions in that their homes were equipped with a study or home library. This would probably mean that these students also had access to a greater variety of reference texts. Yet surprisingly enough, Table XVIII, which gives the tabulation for this section, shows that most of these pupils are in the average and low classifications. Only two of the twelve are regarded as high students.

Table XVIII reveals that every room in the house is used for study purposes. Only one student was found to use

TABLE XVIII

PLACE WHERE ORDEAN STUDENTS  
USUALLY DO THEIR HOMEWORK

Place	Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades				
	Boys	Girls	High	Average	Low
Study or home library	6.1	3.1	2.2	6.3	5.6
Bedroom	46.6	43.8	43.6	42.5	51.8
Kitchen	17.5	11.7	10.5	18.3	13.7
Dining room	12.2	21.1	23.1	18.1	6.4
Living room	13.0	17.2	16.2	13.0	16.8
Basement	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0
Other	<u>3.8</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>0.9</u>	<u>5.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Place	Percent by Grades				
	7th	8th	9th	Total	
Study or home library	7.0	1.0	6.0	4.6	
Bedroom	40.7	45.7	50.0	45.4	
Kitchen	17.4	14.2	12.2	14.7	
Dining room	17.4	19.5	12.2	16.5	
Living room	16.3	14.2	14.7	15.1	
Basement	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.3	
Other	<u>1.2</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.4</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

the basement to do his homework. The greatest number of pupils named the bedroom as the place where they generally work on their assignments. The 45.4 percent who studied in the bedroom probably chose this room because it was the one place where they would be least bothered with distractions, and also where facilities for study were located. In all categories, at least 40.0 percent of the students are found to study here.

There is a surprisingly close relationship in the study habits of boys and girls as far as choice of room for study purposes is concerned. Only slight differences are noted between the sexes.

High and average students are found to use the dining room for studying more often than do low students, whereas the low students use the bedroom most frequently. All three classifications use the latter room to the largest extent, however. The same holds true when comparing grade levels where no really important variations are found to exist.

#### 4. Use of radio or television while doing homework.

Can students do two things at one time? This is probably attempted quite often even when the answer is no. Life nowadays has many fascinating activities and entertainments and, as a result, a student's attention can become divided. Science programs, English dramas, news, and a number of other educational or simply entertaining activities come

into homes when the student must be poring over a textbook. Many educators say this out-of-school education can be just as valuable as a school assignment. To discover the study habits of Ordean pupils regarding the use of television or radio at the same time as they are doing their homework, a "yes" or "no" response question was included. Table XIX gives an answer to the question of whether Ordean pupils attempt to combine homework and entertainment.

About two out of three pupils taking the questionnaire said they did not keep the radio or television on while doing homework. The boys' study habits, in this respect, are better than those of the girls. A total of 72.7 percent of the boys answered "no" compared to only 55.5 percent of the girls. Since there was no distinction made as to what was listened to, it might be assumed that the number of girls who mix entertainment and study is higher because of their desire for radio "background music".

An improvement that low students might want to consider in order to increase their achievements is indicated from Table XIX. The low students are found to attempt doing two things at once in ten percent more cases than high students.

Significant differences are also noticed when comparing grade levels, for ninth grade pupils come much closer to the fifty-fifty division of "yes" and "no" responses than do seventh and eighth graders. Seventh grade pupils

TABLE XIX

PUPIL STUDY HABITS IN THE USE OF RADIO  
OR TELEVISION WHILE DOING THEIR HOMEWORK

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Do you usually keep the radio or TV on while doing homework?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Response</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	27.3	44.5	31.0	35.3	40.9
No	<u>72.7</u>	<u>55.5</u>	<u>69.0</u>	<u>64.7</u>	<u>59.1</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Response</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	26.7	38.0	42.7	35.8
No	<u>73.3</u>	<u>62.0</u>	<u>57.3</u>	<u>64.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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evidently place the greatest premium on getting schoolwork done in silence, for the 73.3 percent who selected "no" represented the highest total percentage for any of the nine classifications in Table XIX.

#### VIII. HOMEWORK AND COPYING

Tension and a sense of pressure are often associated with homework. If a student is not able to resist television and outside activities and yet must also see that assignments are turned in on time, the lack of willpower might easily be replaced by a tendency to find easier means of getting assignments completed. No doubt one of the easiest ways out is to find a friend who has done the work and then just copy it. In fact, Belle Schiller<sup>15</sup> reports in her questionnaire study of New York junior high schools that quite a few students of this age level share their intellectual wealth with few guilt feelings. This copying of assignments is a problem that most schools find difficult to combat. The most obvious way to begin would be to determine the extent of copying at the present time. There is, no doubt, a tendency on the part of the pupils to underestimate the amount of copying they do themselves so two approaches were used to make a more satisfactory estimate.

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<sup>15</sup>Schiller, Belle, "A Questionnaire Study of Junior High School Students' Reactions To Homework," High Points,

One approach was to ask the students if others copied their homework. In answering this they are not as likely to understate the frequency of copying. The other question asked was if they copied someone else's work. Table XX presents the results from both of these questions.

In comparing the percentages included in this table it can be seen that the corresponding percentages do not vary much when one classification is matched with its counterpart in the other question. For instance 42.3 percent of the entire sample said other students seldom copy their homework and a similar 41.2 percent answered "seldom" when asked whether or not they copied anyone else's work.

Judging from the overall results of the two questions in Table XX, copying of homework is not a widespread practice at Ordean Junior High School. A total of 79.3 percent of all students said they seldom or never copied homework assignments. If the students answered the questionnaire honestly, and there is no reason to suppose they did not, this high figure could be attributed to two things. First, the students are honest about doing assignments by themselves, or, secondly, the nature of the assignments that are given is such that copying is not encouraged. Mechanical exercises will encourage copying, while an assignment that calls for imagination and individuality rules out

TABLE XX

## EXTENT OF HOMEWORK COPYING AT ORDEAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Do other students copy your homework?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Extent</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Always	0.0	2.4	2.5	0.9	0.0
Frequently	0.8	2.4	4.9	0.0	0.0
Sometimes	15.3	26.0	17.2	24.7	17.6
Seldom	39.7	44.9	34.9	47.0	43.8
Never	<u>44.2</u>	<u>24.3</u>	<u>40.5</u>	<u>27.4</u>	<u>38.6</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Extent</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Always	1.2	0.0	2.4	1.2
Frequently	0.0	1.0	3.7	1.5
Sometimes	12.9	27.5	20.8	20.6
Seldom	42.4	39.6	45.1	42.3
Never	<u>43.5</u>	<u>31.9</u>	<u>28.0</u>	<u>34.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Do you copy anyone else's homework?

Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades

<u>Extent</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Always	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	3.2
Frequently	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.9	1.7
Sometimes	15.9	21.1	13.4	16.4	28.2
Seldom	34.8	47.7	36.0	44.3	44.0
Never	<u>47.0</u>	<u>28.8</u>	<u>49.3</u>	<u>37.4</u>	<u>22.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Percent by Grades

<u>Extent</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Always	1.2	1.0	0.0	0.7
Frequently	1.2	1.0	2.4	1.5
Sometimes	10.4	26.0	18.3	18.5
Seldom	34.9	34.9	54.9	41.2
Never	<u>52.3</u>	<u>37.1</u>	<u>24.4</u>	<u>38.1</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

copying and challenges the students to work effectively.

Girls were found to copy assignments and let others copy more often than boys. This can best be seen by comparing those who answered "never" to both questions. The boys chose this alternative 44.2 percent of the time for the first question and 47 percent of the time for the second. The girls on the other hand were much lower at 24.3 and 28.8 percent for the two questions respectively.

In the high, average, and low classifications, most observers would guess that low students do more copying than high students, and that fewer pupils would approach the low students for assignments to copy. Table XX lends support to the first of these assumptions, but not to the latter. When asked, "Do other students copy your homework?", the differences between high and low students were negligible except that only in the high classification were there a few students who shared their work "always" or "frequently". However, when asked if they copied anyone else's homework, 49.3 percent of high students answered "never" compared to only 22.9 percent of the low students. Only in the low classification are there found a few students who always copy someone else's homework.

The seventh graders gained the honor of being the group which did the least amount of assignment copying. A total of 87.2 percent of the seventh graders stated they "seldom" or "never" copied homework while only 72 percent

of the eighth graders and 79.3 percent of the ninth graders surveyed could make the same claim. In response to whether or not other students copied their work, the findings remained consistent, for the seventh grade pupils held almost the identical majority over the eighth and ninth grade students for the same two alternatives. This fact was taken as further indication that the questionnaire was a reliable instrument.

#### IX. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN HOMEWORK COMPLETION

Articles by educators have appeared within the last decade advising parents not to try to help their children at home with their lessons. The attitude of these educators was mainly that parents had no background to teach properly, especially in some subjects like mathematics. Other educators have repeatedly deplored this attitude, for they point out there is no one right way to teach. For this reason some schools encourage parents to help their children at home. To find out the extent of aid Ordean students are receiving from their parents in the satisfactory completion of homework, three questions were included, each treating the subject from a different viewpoint. The role of the parents of Ordean students is outlined by the information presented in the next three tables.

Aid to students can be given in a number of different ways, not only by sitting down and helping them to understand

the subject matter. Too many parents restrict their help to just this. The first of these "outside" aids is simply to make a regular practice of checking what homework the student has to do each night. The extent to which this was done in the case of Ordean students is revealed by Table XXI.

A total of 73.1 percent of the parents do ask their children what homework they have, indicating that the school has substantial support in this respect. Table XXI shows that boys get "put on the spot" more often than girls, 78 percent as compared to 68 percent of the girls.

The high students evidently are able to take responsibilities upon themselves more often than the average or low students, for 68.9 percent of them said "yes" to the question of whether their parents asked about homework they had to do. This was a little less than the 73.8 percent and 76.4 percent of average and low students answering in the same way.

There are no major differences found when comparing the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.

The survey also probed another area in which the role of the parent can be of benefit without having to resort to actual help with the subject matter. This concerns the practice of checking to make certain their child's homework is completed, a simple but important task in the case

TABLE XXI  
THE ROLE OF PARENTS  
IN THE COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

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Do your parents usually ask what homework you have to do?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Yes	78.0	68.0	68.9	73.8	76.4
No	<u>22.0</u>	<u>32.0</u>	<u>31.1</u>	<u>26.2</u>	<u>23.6</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yes	76.7	71.7	70.7	73.1
No	<u>23.3</u>	<u>28.3</u>	<u>29.3</u>	<u>26.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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of some students. This is not to imply that parents should force, cajole, bribe, or punish in order to get the work done. If these methods were used, the work would, no doubt, get completed, but hardly in a way that suggests learning can be interesting. The help offered by the parent when checking assignment completion should ideally be the kind that helps the child grow in ability to assume responsibility. This can best be accomplished by making the check with the intention of complimenting a job well done, not with the attitude of "you better have it done or else". Without probing into the kind of help given Ordean students in this respect, some information was gained by the inclusion of the question, "Do your parents make certain your homework is completed?" Table XXII presents the findings of this part of the survey.

Here again the parents of Ordean students are found to be of help in most cases. A total of 58.8 percent of the pupils taking part in the survey said either their parents always checked on them or they frequently did so. Only 8.5 percent stated they were never checked.

The differences recorded under each of the alternatives for boys and girls do not show a great deal of variation. The parents of the boys did make sure their homework was completed in more cases than for the girls. This can best be seen by adding the totals for "seldom" and "never".

The girls had a total of 28.2 percent for these two alternatives while the boys had exactly ten percent less.

The percentages of Table XXII bear out the usual notion that low students need more "checking on" than high students. The differences here are quite significant, for 48.5 percent of the low students reported that parents always made certain their homework was complete compared to only 29 percent of the high students. The inference may be drawn that high students are better able to take responsibility for homework completion upon themselves.

As expected the older junior high students also take a greater share of responsibility on themselves, which we discover when comparing the three grade levels. For the alternative "always", the percentages get progressively smaller as one moves from the seventh to the ninth grade. The differences here are not slight, for over one half of the younger students' parents always made certain homework was completed compared to 35.9 percent of the eighth and 20.7 percent of the ninth grade students. In the alternatives "seldom" and "never", 34.1 percent of the older students state this extent of parental checking compared to only 11.6 percent of the seventh grade pupils.

The help that a student gets at home is certainly of doubtful educational value sometimes. Some parents who mean well can confuse the child by using methods different

TABLE XXII

THE ROLE OF PARENTS  
IN THE COMPLETION OF HOMEWORK

Do your parents make certain your homework is completed?

	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	Boys	Girls	High	Average	Low
Always	38.6	34.4	29.0	35.5	48.5
Frequently	22.7	21.9	20.6	26.8	16.1
Sometimes	20.5	15.5	16.2	18.6	18.9
Seldom	10.6	18.8	22.3	11.6	10.5
Never	<u>7.6</u>	<u>9.4</u>	<u>11.9</u>	<u>7.5</u>	<u>6.0</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	7th	8th	9th	Total
Always	52.3	35.9	20.7	36.5
Frequently	24.4	18.5	24.4	22.3
Sometimes	11.7	21.7	20.8	18.1
Seldom	8.1	16.3	19.5	14.6
Never	<u>3.5</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>14.6</u>	<u>8.5</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

from those used in school. Others will put too much pressure on the child, and in few isolated cases, will actually do some assignments for the students. Ideally, parents help by pointing out principles involved, giving illustrations, and making suggestions for the pupil's study. Most parents can be of great help in this respect. To discover the extent of direct aid given to Ordean pupils by their parents, the third question concerning the role of parents was phrased, "How often do your parents help you with your homework?". The percentages for each of the five alternatives are given in Table XXIII.

The percentages recorded show that the help of parents is not offered or not needed quite as often here as in checking on what homework students have and whether or not they complete it. The greatest number of the junior high students surveyed get help with their homework either "sometimes" or "seldom". A total of 79.1 percent of pupils in the sample selected these two alternatives. There were no major differences between the sexes on this point.

The help given by parents to high, average, and low students with their assignments does show some variance in frequency. High students appear to require less help with homework than do average or low students. This fact is brought to attention by the total of 62.0 percent of the high students who said they seldom or never got help from parents. This may be compared with the percentages of

TABLE XXIII

EXTENT OF HELP GIVEN BY PARENTS TO ORDEAN  
PUPILS TO AID IN UNDERSTANDING THEIR HOMEWORK

<u>Extent of Help</u>	<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>				
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Always	3.1	1.6	0.0	2.8	6.0
Frequently	6.9	5.5	3.5	6.1	9.9
Sometimes	46.5	41.7	34.5	49.6	44.9
Seldom	29.8	41.0	48.9	30.2	27.0
Never	<u>13.7</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>13.1</u>	<u>11.3</u>	<u>12.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

  

<u>Extent of Help</u>	<u>Percent by Grades</u>			
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>
Always	3.5	3.4	1.2	2.7
Frequently	9.3	5.6	3.7	6.2
Sometimes	52.4	42.5	36.6	44.0
Seldom	29.0	37.4	39.0	35.1
Never	<u>5.8</u>	<u>11.1</u>	<u>19.5</u>	<u>12.0</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

41.5 and 39.2 for the average and low students respectively. On the other hand 15.9 percent of the low students get help "always" or "frequently" in contrast to just 3.5 percent of the high students.

The parent's help with homework gets progressively less as the student advances from seventh to ninth grade. The seventh grade students were divided as follows: 65.2 percent for the first three alternatives of "sometimes", "frequently", and "always" receiving help, and 34.8 percent for the last two alternatives of "seldom" and "never". For the eighth grade the similar division was almost fifty-fifty with the first three alternatives having a slight advantage. Only in the ninth grade was the majority transferred to the last two alternatives with 58.5 percent of the students stating their parents seldom or never helped them with homework. Here again, the differences probably result from the need for greater independence by the older students and a correspondingly greater assumption of responsibility to see that homework is completed.

#### X. STUDENT NEEDS AND HOMEWORK

One objective of the survey which was by-passed earlier in order to have a more logical order of presentation, was to gain a better understanding of student needs by discovering how adequately or inadequately they are being met at present by the assignments given. Actually many of the

findings that have already been discussed have contributed information to the fulfillment of this objective. However, a direct attempt was also made through the inclusion of four questions dealing with the kind of assignments now given by the Ordean faculty.

Some types of assignments are clearly more beneficial than others--beneficial, that is, in the sense that greater and more retentive learning takes place or else in the sense that students do not find them distasteful. To gain an insight into the typical kinds of assignments that students find most helpful, they were asked what type of homework assignment they felt helped them the most. Six alternatives, depicting the traditional kinds of outside study were listed along with a seventh choice "other" to enable the student to fill in any assignment which he felt more helpful than those listed. These alternatives and the percentages of students choosing them are shown in Table XXIV.

By far the greatest percentage of the 260 pupils in the survey favored "answering questions by reading in the text" to any of the other types of homework. Table XXIV reveals that 42 percent favored this kind of homework. The homework that was reported least helpful was "getting clippings from magazines and newspapers" and "writing themes, poems, and stories". Some students may find these disagreeable assignments, and, therefore, consider them least helpful, but regardless of reasons why some were chosen in

TABLE XXIV

THE KIND OF HOMEWORK ORDEAN  
STUDENTS FEEL IS MOST HELPFUL TO THEM

<u>Percent 7th, 8th, and 9th Grades</u>					
<u>Kind of Homework</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>
Answering text questions	43.0	42.2	40.8	44.0	40.0
Reports on books etc.	19.5	15.6	19.5	13.0	21.1
Using reference books	7.8	10.9	12.3	12.3	4.8
Working problems	19.5	17.2	17.0	17.4	21.1
Getting clippings	1.6	3.1	2.4	1.8	3.3
Writing themes etc.	3.1	6.3	5.6	6.9	0.0
Other	<u>5.5</u>	<u>4.7</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>9.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Percent by Grades</u>					
<u>Kind of Homework</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Answering text questions	43.0	51.1	30.5	42.0	
Reports on books etc.	18.6	17.5	15.9	17.4	
Using reference books	19.8	5.5	7.3	10.7	
Working problems	9.3	14.1	31.7	18.0	
Getting clippings	2.3	0.0	4.9	2.3	
Writing themes etc.	1.2	9.7	2.4	4.6	
Other	<u>5.8</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>7.3</u>	<u>5.0</u>	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

preference to others, the information given in Table XXIV should be of value to teachers in considering the sentiments and needs of the majority of their students. The thirteen students who selected the alternative "other" made comments favoring homework consisting of worksheets, and combinations of the six choices listed.

The boys and girls in the study were in very close agreement regarding homework policies as has been the case in most other areas of this survey. The majority of both groups was found to favor the answering of questions from a textbook. This shows that the textbooks serve an important function outside of class as well as for class study.

One difference among high, average, and low students occurs in the alternative "looking up questions in reference books such as encyclopedias and dictionaries". This type of homework is evidently more disagreeable or of less help to low students than to either of the higher classifications. Only 4.8 percent of those who had at least one failure selected this alternative compared to identical 12.3 percentages for high and average students. It is interesting to note that only in the low classification was there no student who felt that writing themes, poems, or stories was helpful.

Significant differences did exist among the three grade levels. Table XXIV shows that ninth grade students split their choices of beneficial homework between "answer-

ing questions from the textbook" and "working more problems like those learned in class" with each alternative having about 31 percent selecting it. On the other hand seventh and eighth graders had the greatest majority favoring the first alternative, where 43.0 and 51.1 percent respectively made this their choice. The main reason for this difference can be explained in one word, mathematics. It will be remembered from Table VII that a large majority of ninth grade students selected this subject as the one in which they considered homework most important. This was not true for seventh and eighth grade students, primarily in that they do not take algebra. Thus, it stands to reason that the ninth graders would also place a higher priority on the kind of homework that involves working problems such as algebra assignments do. The questionnaire again proved consistent in this respect.

Three "free answer" type questions were used to further examine the needs of Ordean students regarding homework policies. This type of question does not lend itself to tabulation or the gathering of specific data, but the purpose of the study was not solely the gaining of facts. Valuable suggestions can be given by students in this manner; suggestions and grievances that may never have entered the teacher's mind. Excellent assignment ideas are sometimes the outgrowth of a single statement made by one

individual. Certainly, opinions will vary and contradictions will result, especially in a subject as controversial as homework.

A questionnaire can be used as a means of developing an improved feeling on the part of the students taking it, for it should give them a chance to vent their grievances and give their suggestions. For this reason one of the questions at the end of the form was, "What was the one homework assignment given so far this year that you think helped you the most?". Another question concerned the assignment which students felt helped them the least. In the final question the students were asked to list ways in which they felt homework assignments could be improved. The quotes which follow under each of the three categories below are representative of those given throughout the 260 returned questionnaires. Arguments can be given for both sides of many of the opinions. Some quotes may not be the sentiments of the majority of the students, but the minority must also be heard.

1. What was the one homework assignment given so far this year that you feel helped you the most?

1. "Not just one, but all my mathematics assignments have helped me."
2. "All the assignments I have had in algebra."
3. "In civics, finding out from different sources about the different occupations."
4. "In English I write little stories. It might help me to choose my career."
5. "Social studies worksheets."

6. "All of the oral reports in English give me confidence."
7. "Learning how to write editorials in newspaper work."
8. "An assignment in civics to write on one of the presidents."
9. "Writing on forty four composers for music."
10. "Social studies report on vocations of your choice."

2. What was the one assignment given so far this year that you think helped you the least?"

1. "Just reading the book like in science and social studies."
2. "Drawing heating systems in science."
3. "A mathematics assignment in which we had all review problems."
4. "The report in social studies that the teacher never asked for."
5. "An assignment in English to learn about the library which I did last year and also in the sixth grade."
6. "In science we drew something out of a book and all it did was take up time."
7. "Making an English notebook."
8. "In science when we had to watch "The Strange Case of the Cosmic Rays" on television when we had already seen it at school."
9. "A report on Marcus Whitman because the teacher never asked for them."
10. "In choir, writing on too many composers at once."

3. In what ways do you feel homework assignments can be improved so that you get more benefit from them?

1. "I think teachers should explain more about the assignments and make them more clear."
2. "Do not have assignments that will not help in the least in later life."
3. "Don't give so many assignments, but make them harder."
4. "Have a part of the class period set aside for doing assignments so that we can ask the teacher if we don't understand it."
5. "If the small, unimportant assignments were not given so often, the bigger, helpful assignments would

get done more readily."

6. "Give more assignments that make us dig for material such as from encyclopedias and dictionaries."

7. "Put in some reasoning questions not found in the textbook."

8. "Have us do assignments that give us further practice on what we do in class."

9. "I feel we have very few assignments that are strictly homework. Usually it is schoolwork that doesn't get well done. I think we should have time in school to finish schoolwork and then have homework for certain classes on certain days i.e. civics on Monday, algebra on Tuesday, etc."

10. "We should read the textbooks more. Half the students I know haven't read it at all."

11. "Assignments should be given to help us learn what we don't know, not what we already know."

12. "We should not have more than one chapter a night."

13. "Use more thinking and less writing in homework."

14. "Give something different instead of the same thing all the time."

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY

The controversy which has accompanied the various phases of assignment giving throughout the country is reason enough for a study of homework policies as they apply to the teachers and pupils of Ordean Junior High School. The information obtained from the thirty-two questions asked of a sample of students of three grade levels was organized, tabulated, and discussed to indicate the reactions of Ordean pupils regarding the schoolwork they were being asked to do at present.

Before making any broad statements favoring the extension or abolition of homework, careful research should be undertaken to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the program and to discover how the various groups involved have worked together thus far to solve any problems. As is generally conceded, some homework is sensible and educative and some is not. The degree to which the entire homework program is beneficial is what seems to be the cause of the controversy. This study has added a little more emphasis to the idea that homework can be a busy wire of communication between the home and school. Students and parents both indicate concern about the problem of whether or not homework can be made to function in the

growth and learning of the majority of students. The conclusion that can be reached as far as Ordean pupils are concerned is that it can serve such a purpose.

One thing that was very clear and to be expected was that a teacher will not please every student or every parent regardless of what is done in or out of class. This would be true for any area of education, for people vary in their likes and dislikes and have different goals in life. This fact was evident in every phase of the homework problem discussed in the study, for in every case some contradictory opinions were given; in fact, if such did not show up in the various sections, the validity of the instrument could very well be questioned.

It was inevitable that the time expenditure of both pupils and teachers in and out of class would be considered in the question of whether or not the assigning of homework is a good practice. The conscientious teacher is constantly searching for new and effective devices for providing interesting and worthwhile assignments. This takes time and thought outside of class, for it is not always clear what kinds of assignments are going to be both valuable and interesting to the students. The dedicated student also spends a corresponding amount of time carrying out the assignment. In addition there is the time spend correcting assignments that have been turned in and explaining new ones. With all this it is little wonder the value of outside

work is often questioned. However, in view of the overall results obtained from this particular study, it does seem profitable to use all this time for the purpose of assigning home study. As long as the work is kept reasonable in amount, the general concensus of Ordean pupils is that homework does play a part in leading them towards their future objectives. As assignments become more creative and emphasize problem solving and research instead of "busy work", the classroom, library, and home do become effective places for study.

Because homework has often been ill-used, many people seem prone to want it eliminated completely. Instead factors such as the following should be taken into account when formulating homework policies: the grade level, the subject matter, the achievement level of the students, and the amount of homework assigned. This survey has shown that opinions of students vary depending on each of these considerations. This evaluation of homework at Ordean emphasizes the fact that it must be handled according to conditions that exist within the class structure. Homework can be a disagreeable task sometimes, especially in light of the numerous distractions with which a student must divide his time. Yet, even the students have shown that they recognize its possibilities, if it is handled properly.

What is homework supposed to accomplish? Is it vital that a student work fifteen problems in mathematics or know the names of the countries in South America, for example?

Those who stress facts and routine will say "yes". However, from comments made by students throughout the questionnaire and especially in the free answer questions, it can be seen that students feel homework is of value when it does other things besides give an accumulation of facts. Variety is much desired for one thing. Also students feel home study is valuable when it will accomplish things like giving practice in skills, giving experience in independently attacking a problem, and acquainting them with the resources of the home, library, and community. In short, the conclusion reached from this study was that most students do accept homework that is wisely assigned. They disapprove of homework if it is given just for the sake of having something to do.

#### I. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This survey represents a gathering of opinions from seventh, eighth, and ninth grade pupils at Ordean Junior High School. Although the findings apply only to the situation at this particular school, some of the observations may well be typical of other students of the same age. The major conclusions obtained through the use of the questionnaire are briefly summarized below:

1. The majority of students are satisfied with the amount of homework they are assigned at present.
2. Only a small number of students think they should have no outside assignments.
3. The majority of students think one hour of outside school work per day is a reasonable amount to ask of

them.

4. A great majority of all students surveyed feel homework is absolutely necessary in their preparations for the future.

5. Ordean students believe that compulsory homework does result in improved academic accomplishments.

6. Mathematics and science are considered by the majority to be the subjects in which homework is most important.

7. Two-thirds of the students are of the opinion that extra homework should not be given as punishment for misbehaving in class.

8. In the opinion of most students punishment should not be used by parents or teachers to force the completion of homework.

9. The majority of students believe their parents strongly support the value of homework and consider it very important.

10. Copying of assignments is not a widespread practice at Ordean.

11. In most cases the study habits of Ordean students are satisfactory.

12. The parents of Ordean students are of great help in checking whether the student has homework to do, whether he completes it, and in giving actual aid to the student in understanding the assignments.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was limited in scope to give greater concentration to just one area of the homework problem, the students themselves. Certainly, it does not point the way to a final solution of the entire controversy. It was not possible to cover all the details even within the limited extent of the student questionnaire. It is no doubt possible to find other interpretations of the data that has been accumulated and presented in this study, and further evaluation is desirable. In fact, a more extensive study into the parent and teacher aspects of the homework problem

is to be recommended as the obvious next step.

On the basis of this survey, it seems that no broad school-wide changes in homework policies are necessary at present. However, individual classroom changes in assignment giving would be desirable. The majority of the students are of the opinion that they have the right amount of homework and, more important, that it is of value to them. It would seem far wiser to continue to assign some intelligent, thought-provoking homework rather than to leave the student completely on his own to decide how he will spend all of his free time away from school. A quote from Furman seems to adequately cover the findings of the study.

In the light of my teaching experience, the only circumstances under which the plan of "no homework" might be successful are: (1) if adequate numbers of reference books were available to pupils in each classroom; (2) if high school classes were made much smaller than they are now so that the teacher could give more attention to individual students; (3) if the school day were lengthened to provide extra study periods.<sup>16</sup>

In view of the findings of this survey, a recommendation might be made that teachers should not use homework as a punishment. In so doing the teacher runs the risk of antagonizing the majority of students and causing them to dislike the subject matter and all other homework as well. Although extra assignments may be all right in some cases,

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<sup>16</sup>Furman, Juliet B., "Comments on No More Homework," New York Times Magazine, February 3, 1952, p. 4.

the policy of using them as a disciplinary measure is not recommended.

The pupils who participated in this survey demonstrated that a questionnaire can be used as a satisfactory device for gathering data from students of junior high school age. It is hoped that the time spent on this problem will result in an improved type of assignment. Since the final objective of the survey was to become a better teacher through the use of assignment techniques which students find most interesting and helpful, more thought and planning will be given to assignments by the author, and it is hoped, also by other teachers in the school system. This study is not the complete answer, but it is a start in the right direction.

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**APPENDIX**

Announcement over the Ordean Junior High School public address system on February 7, 1958

Some of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade classes will be taking a questionnaire during homeroom guidance period today. All students in these classes should remain in their homerooms until they complete the questionnaire. Please cooperate by answering all questions seriously and honestly.

I. Directions to the teacher giving the questionnaire:

1.) Make certain each student answers the questionnaire independently.

2.) Avoid giving opinions that will introduce bias. We do not want the students starting with a "mind set"; for instance, the idea that "here is our chance to get ride of homework". The form is not being given for this purpose.

3.) It is important that the students take the questionnaire seriously.

4.) There is no time limit, but be sure all students have a chance to complete the form.

5.) Before you let anyone start, read the directions at the bottom of this page.

II. Before handing out the questionnaire, read the following to all students:

This being your homeroom guidance day, we have a short project that should prove worthwhile for students and teachers alike. This homeroom has been selected as a part of a sample of Ordean Junior High School students. You will take part in a study being made regarding homework and study conditions that exist in our school at the present time. Each of you will receive a short questionnaire form that is designed to measure in some degree your reactions and your study habits. You will not be identified for you do not have to sign your name, yet it is of utmost importance that you answer every question seriously and honestly.

III. Pass out the forms and read these directions before they begin:

Each student should have a form of 7 pages (check). Be sure to read the directions on page one and fill in all information. Take as much time as you wish to completely answer all questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

It is very important that you be honest in making a choice of alternatives that are given. Do not answer the questions as you think they SHOULD be answered, but rather in terms of the things you actually DO in regard to your schoolwork. Make a choice for all of the questions; do not leave any unanswered. In the spaces provided, write responses which best describe your own personal feelings. When you finish, hand in the entire form and work on other things, but do not talk.

Homework Questionnaire

Sponsored by the Duluth School System

Student Form

We are trying to learn your ideas on homework in order to gain a better understanding of student needs. For the purposes of this form, the term "homework" should be taken to mean that schoolwork which is completed outside of Ordean Junior High (at home, Public Library, friend's home, etc.) The term "assignment" shall refer to any schoolwork given by the teachers for completion outside the regular class hour. Take time to think about these questions so your answers will be as complete and honest as you can make them. When answering the questions, keep in mind those things which you feel are most important in furthering your education and for your future needs. You need not write your name. Thank you for your help.

(Circle just the number of your answer-choose only one)

Sex     M \_\_\_\_\_  
           F \_\_\_\_\_  
           Grade \_\_\_\_\_

1. There have been three grading periods so far this year. Circle the number of times you have been on:
 

1. "A" honor roll	3	2	1
2. Merit roll	3	2	1
3. No honor roll	3	2	1
  
2. Have you received at least one "F" in any one of your major subjects so far this year? (Eng., Math., Social Studies, History, Science, Geog.)
  1. Yes
  2. No
  
3. How often do you take home schoolwork?
  1. Every school day
  2. Almost every school day
  3. Once or twice a week
  4. Very seldom
  5. Never

4. If you do take schoolwork home, on the average about how much time do you spend completing your assignments?
  1. Four hours or more
  2. About three hours
  3. About two hours
  4. About one hour
  5. Less than an hour
  
5. About how much time per school day do you think you should be asked to spend on all outside class assignments?
  1. Four hours or more
  2. About three hours
  3. About two hours
  4. About one hour
  5. Less than an hour
  6. There should be no outside class assignments; they do not help me.
  
6. Do you have a regular, one hour study period in school (besides activity period)?
  1. yes
  2. no
  
7. About how much of all your outside class assignments do you get completed during school hours (study periods, etc.)?
  1. All of them
  2. Most of them
  3. About one half
  4. Very little
  5. None
  
8. At what time do you usually do the major part of your outside class assignments?
  1. During a study period in school
  2. Immediately after school when I get home
  3. Soon after supper
  4. After 9:00
  5. Before classes start in the morning
  6. I don't bother with them
  7. Others (explain)-
  
9. In what room do you usually do your homework?
  1. Study or home library
  2. Bedroom
  3. Kitchen
  4. Dining room
  5. Living room
  6. Basement
  7. Others-

10. Do you usually keep the radio or TV turned on so that you can listen while doing your homework?
1. Yes
  2. No
11. What would you do if your favorite program is on radio or TV and you have homework to complete?
1. I would (listento-watch) the program and forget about the homework.
  2. I would (listen to-watch) the program and do the homework afterward.
  3. I would arrange to have the assignments completed before the program.
  4. I would work on the assignments and forget about the program.
  5. My parents (or others) would make me finish the homework before I could (watch-listen).
  6. I would do the assignment and (watch-listen to) the program at the same time.
  7. Others--
12. If any homework gets too hard for you, what do you do?
1. I ask my parents to do it (or brothers, sisters, etc.).
  2. I ask my parents (brothers, sisters, etc.) to help me to understand it.
  3. I wait until the next day and ask my teacher.
  4. I call a friend who knows how to do it.
  5. I copy someone else's work.
  6. I just don't do it.
  7. Others--
13. If you are given too much homework for one night, what do you usually do?
1. I see that I complete it all
  2. I do all I can that night and hand the others in late.
  3. I do all I can and let the rest go undone.
  4. I work a smaller part of each assignment and hand that in.
  5. I don't do any of it.
  6. I do all I can and finish by copying someone else's work.
  7. Others--
14. Does homework ever encourage you to look up "unknowns" on your own--to seek out more information on the subject even though it is not necessary for the assignment?

1. Yes
  2. No
15. In what major subject do you feel homework is most important for your understanding and learning class material?
1. English
  2. Mathematics (Algebra)
  3. Science
  4. Social Studies (History, Geography, Civics)
  5. Other (name it)--
16. In what major subject do you feel homework is least important for your understanding and learning the class material?
1. English
  2. Mathematics (algebra)
  3. Science
  4. Social Studies (History, Geography, Civics)
  5. Other (name it)--
17. What kind of homework assignment do you feel helps you the most?
1. Answering questions by reading in a text-book.
  2. Reading books and articles and reporting on them (written reports).
  3. Looking up questions in reference books such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc.
  4. Working more problems like those learned in class.
  5. Getting clippings from magazines and newspapers.
  6. Writing themes, poems, stories etc.
  7. Others (write in briefly)--
18. Do you feel that homework is absolutely necessary if you are to get an adequate education to prepare you for the future?
1. Yes
  2. No
19. Should additional assignments (extra homework) be given to students as punishment?
1. Yes
  2. No
- Why, or why not? (Explain briefly).

20. Do other students copy your homework?
1. Always
  2. Frequently
  3. Sometimes
  4. Seldom
  5. Never
21. Do you copy anyone else's homework?
1. Always
  2. Frequently
  3. Sometimes
  4. Seldom
  5. Never
22. Should a student be forced by parents or teachers into completing homework by threatening punishment (taking away privileges) if the assignment is not done?
1. Yes
  2. No
  3. Other (Explain)--
23. Have you found in the past the amount of homework you do has an important bearing on the grades you get in your subjects?
1. Yes
  2. No
24. Do your parents usually ask you what homework you have to do?
1. Yes
  2. No
25. How often do your parents help you with your homework?
1. Always
  2. Frequently
  3. Sometimes
  4. Seldom
  5. Never
26. Do your parents make certain you get your homework completed?
1. Always
  2. Frequently
  3. Sometimes
  4. Seldom
  5. Never

27. What do you think is the opinion of your parents in regard to the amount of homework you now bring home?
1. They think I have too much homework.
  2. They think I have too little homework.
  3. They think I have about the right amount of homework.
  4. They think I should have no homework.
  5. Other--
28. What do you think is the opinion of your parents in regard to the value of the homework you now bring home?
1. They feel all homework is very important if I'm to get a good education.
  2. They feel that a part of my homework is important, but not all of it.
  3. They feel that homework is not important, but I should do it to get good marks.
  4. They feel that homework is not important and don't care whether or not I do it.
  5. Other--
29. With which of these four statements do you come closest to agreeing? (Be sure to read all four before choosing.)
1. Ordean students would be better off with no homework at all.
  2. Although we need homework at Ordean, assignments do more harm than good the way they are given now.
  3. While some assignments are not important to learning, on the whole homework at Ordean is doing more good than harm.
  4. Homework assignments at Ordean have been of value in helping me gain the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that I will need.

Free answer questions. Express yourself as briefly and as accurately as possible in the space provided.

30. What was the one homework assignment given so far this year that you think helped you the most?
31. What was the one homework assignment given so far this year that you think helped you the least?
32. In what ways do you feel homework assignments can be improved so that you get more benefit from them? (List as many as you can).

HONOR ROLL"A" HONOR ROLL

A student must have an "A" in all major subjects, except one in which he may have "B". In minor subjects he may have no grade lower than "C". No "U's" in conduct are allowed.

MERIT ROLL

A student must have at least a "B" in all major subjects except one, and no lower than "C" in that major subject. In minor subjects he may have no lower than "C". No "U's" in conduct are allowed.

(Major subjects are those for which the class meets every day of the week. Minor subjects are those for which the class meets fewer than five times a week.)