A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF PARENTAL REACTION TO HOMEWORK PRACTICES IN GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

A. PURPOSE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

"Education at all levels stands on the threshold of a major revolution which could transform the schools unbelievably."[1] These are the words which opened NEA's Educational Special Report in January, 1967. Their whole tenet of assembly revolved around the theme that it is time that we quit studying educational problems to death, and begin solving them. It was a distinct call for action with blueprints instead of just research.

It is with determination in mind that the problem of homework was again tackled with the hope that the parents could shed some ray of light on it. The Educational Policies Commission lists Homework as one of the ten contemporary issues in education. Who, beside the parents, is so well versed as to what is best for the child between the hours of his "coming-home-hungry-from-school" and his "falling-into-bed-very-tired". To keep homework relevant, useful, and within the bounds of reason we need the guidance of the parents' opinions. Homework is often the only direct means of

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[1]NEA Special Report, Technology in Education, Washington, D.C.: (NEA National School Public Relations Association), p. 1.

communication between the home and school. Through homework parents and teachers talk to one another. It is important in our upgrading of homework that this dialogue not become a monologue of the teachers. A questionnaire survey reflects the attitude of the parent and has far reaching influences for the betterment of the child. If, through this survey, the teacher becomes conversant with the child's environment, more effective pupil growth is assured.

This study was made to ascertain whether parental opinions and practices differed according to two major divergent educational and economic backgrounds from which the sampling was made. One must have a complete picture to ensure improvement, so questions were asked relating to the cultural background of the home, type of homework found most valuable, amount of time spent on it, and the environmental set-up that the student has when he does his homework. From the reactions of the parents to the various questions which were asked of them, it is the intention of the writer to help formulate a general homework policy for the parochial schools of Duluth.

In organizing the questionnaire, the following specific objectives were formulated:

1. To seek the general opinion of parents regarding homework.

2. To determine whether parental opinions are affected by past educational training.

3. To point up the need for teachers to have a wide knowledge of their students' home environment and assign homework accordingly.

4. To obtain from the parents their opinions regarding:

a. their capability of helping the child with his homework.

b. the amount of supervision the parents give to the child's homework.

c. the length of time the child should spend on his homework.

d. how often homework should be given.

e. the child's immediate environment when he does his homework.

f. the educational facilities afforded by the home in the way of reference books and other reference materials.

g. the type of homework that benefits the child most.

h. the type of homework that benefits the child least.

5. To use the results of this questionnaire to help formulate a new policy of homework for the Diocese of Duluth Parochial School System.

B. NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It is believed that in our society there is a greater need for parents and teachers to relate to one another more effectively regarding the mutual problems of the school and home. Parents should be able to have an active part in the formulating of school policies. It is believed that with the results of this study, the parents' opinions and suggestions will have an impact in the formulation of the Diocesan homework policy. This whole study is aimed at the betterment of the student. It is also vital that the parents achieve more responsibility for the homework of the child.

Parents like to be a part of the school. In filling out a questionnaire aimed directly at their reactions they will feel that they are viewed with importance and are instrumental in deciding focal points of their children's education.

Homework is here to stay. Educators agree that the problem is not, "Should there be homework," but "What type and kind would best fulfill the objectives of learning?" Homework in the junior high can capitalize on the child's natural urge to be independent, for each assignment is his responsibility. It can give parents a chance to communicate important values--"persistence in the face of difficulty, doing honest work, finding satisfaction in accomplishment, and experiencing a joy in work that can be more rewarding

than the joy of play."[2]

C. DEFINITION OF TERMS

There is a divergence of opinion as to just what is meant by homework. As the term implies it is work done at home; but the kind of work expected to be accomplished by the student will depend to a great extent on the curriculum of the school and the manner of teaching of the individual teacher.

For the purposes of this survey, the terms used in the questionnaire will be defined as follows:

Homework. Any task, motivated or initiated in the classroom, performed outside of regular school time which enriches, strengthens, or extends learning directly associated to classwork.

Study time. A definite time set aside each day in the home for the purpose of doing homework.

Assignment. Work assigned by the teacher to be completed by the student. This may be accomplished during a given class period, a study period, or taken home. If the work is taken home to be completed, it is considered in the category of "homework".

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[2]Ruth Strang, "Helping Your Child with His Homework," P.T.A. Magazine, 56:27, November, 1961.

D. THE ROLE OF HOMEWORK IN EDUCATION

"The history of homework is filled with paradoxes. Some periods of history affirm that homework is a positive factor in learning while other articles based on equally reliable evidence indicate that homework is not a help to children."[3] The philosophy of educators concerning homework ranges from the belief that homework should be nightly to having no homework at all.[4]

One of the earliest recommendations regarding length of time to be spent on homework was made by the Board of Superintendents of New York in 1904. It stated that in grades three and four homework be restricted to one subject each day; grades five and six be restricted to two subjects involving one hour of study time; grades seven and eight restricted to three subjects involving one and one-half hours of study time.[5] In 1915 the type of homework to be given was defined. It should be in the nature of review, not advance work; an application of the work studied in class, and not as punishment.[6]

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[3]Waldemar Olson, "Homework--Friend or Foe to Children?" The Instructor, 71:6, January, 1962.

[4]Edward W. Smith, et al., The Educators' Encyclopedia, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 679.

[5]"Homework", Elementary School Journal, 29:647-651, May, 1929.

[6]Ibid., p. 648.

In 1923 Cubberley made the statement that, "In many schools the most serious cause of friction between parents and school, and the basis of most of the criticism of the school, is this matter of home study by the children.[7] Many schools at this time abandoned homework for pupils below seventh grade and turned instead to teaching pupils to do effective studying in the school. When the student entered Junior High School, homework would be given him. The role of the home would be solely to provide the conditions conducive to study--quiet, good light, and a definite time and place.

The negative and positive aspects of the problem of homework, along with recommendations for possible solutions, have changed little in the past fifty years in the United States. Let us view the attitude toward this problem in other countries.

Since Sputnik was first launched, American educators have taken a closer look at our school system comparing it with those of other countries. In the Russian schools, the amount of homework is prescribed by the Ministry of Education. Homework for the first three grades--five, six, and seven--should be about two to two and one-half hours daily.[8] In France, medical surveys show that children's health suffers

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[7]Ellwood P. Cubberley, The Principal and His School (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1923), p. 400.

[8]George Bereday, The Changing Soviet School (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1960), p. 202.

from overwork at school. The educators and parents agree on this. Little is done to correct this because most of the better jobs are given on the basis of selection examinations.[9] In Denmark there is usually three to four hours of homework assigned but this is mostly reading and understanding of textbook assignments. These assignments are seldom written.[10]

Referring to the value of homework in education, Havighurst implies that, "if a pupil does not learn to get satisfaction from tackling and completing difficult tasks by the age of 14, he never will."[11] Because all later learning skills build upon the work of the lower grades, the feeling is indicated here that homework will help solve the problem of achievement. The most valuable aspect of having homework would seem to some educators to be that of the self-discipline involved in the undertaking of an independent task, of being responsible for budgeting one's time so as to complete within the alletted time the designated assignment. It also has value from the public relations viewpoint. Parents are able to see facets of the learning process and are kept informed as to what the child is learning in school.

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[9]Edmund J. King, Other Schools and Ours (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1958), p. 39.

[10]Ibid., p. 23.

[11]Gene D. Maybee, "Homework in the Junior High School," National Association of Secondary Schools Principals Bulletin, 47:16, October, 1963.

Those assignments which meet the needs of the individual child are of the most value. This is generally agreed among educators. Their positive value then would lie in the opportunities it offers him for independent application of something learned at school--to nail down, make certain, or apply a principle, to exercise originality in the learning process.

William D. Hedges brings out very forcefully the need for principals who are developing new homework policies to keep in mind the whole child and his needs, the needs of the teacher, and the varying attitudes of the parents toward homework. "Most homework assignments should be of the type which can be done better away from school."[12]

In summarizing the role and value of homework we find that most educators view it as a necessary means to fill individual needs. Parents are in agreement with this. Assignments should be of a creative interest and an outgrowth of classroom activity. The environment of the home must always be taken into consideration. Dr. Conant, one of the current authorities on education, qualifies his strong recommendation of homework when he comments pointedly, "Homework has little relevance in a situation where home is a filthy, noisy tenement."[13]

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[12]William D. Hedges, "Guidelines for Developing a Homework Policy," The National Elementary Principal, 44:47, November, 1964.

[13]James B. Conant, Slums and Suburbs: A Commentary on Schools in Metropolitan Areas (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961, p. 20.

E. RESEARCH RELATING TO HOMEWORK

Research tells us that only about half of those who enter college ever graduate. Since many of these dropouts are due to inadequate command of fundamental processes, poor self-discipline, and the lack of study skills, more and more attention is being paid to the research that is being done on the quality of the earlier preparation of the student in his elementary and junior high school years. The feeling is rampant that a better quality of instruction while at school and in homework assignments might be the panacea for this ailment. Let us view some research done on this provocative question.

In a study made in California, completed in 1936, regular homework had been assigned in grades five through eight and then the students were tested. Compulsory homework was then abolished for three years and students were again tested. There was no significant difference shown between the group that had homework and the groups that had no homework when Stanford Achievement Tests were administered. Most significant, however, was the deterioriation of their achievement when these same students entered high school as compared to achievements of pupils with years of formal homework. Since the pupils of the two groups were as equally well-prepared from the standpoint of subject matter and skills, the author speculates that "differences in

attitudes or habits of work" may have been responsible.[14]

In one of the yearbooks this statement was made. "Research indicates that youngsters without homework under good instruction and supervised study do as well as those under good instruction with homework."[15] Vincent[16] earlier arrived at this same conclusion. However, Goldstein, in reviewing research on homework, concludes with "Statements that homework contributes little or nothing to academic achievement are not warranted by the experimental findings."[17]

In evaluating the research that has been done regarding the meaning of homework, its helpfulness, and relationship between academic success and length of time spent on homework, June Mulry can arrive at only one conclusion--"that greater study is needed before homework as an educational tool can be fully evaluated."[18] Ruth Strang comments that "research, dealing specifically with homework and

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[14] C. C. Crawford, "Value of Home Study," Elementary School Journal, 38:196, November, 1937.

[15] American Association of School Administrators, Thirty-first Yearbook, American School Curriculum, February, 1953, p. 265.

[16] Harold D. Vincent, "Experimental Test of the Value of Homework in Grades Five and Six," National Elementary Principal, 16:200, June, 1937.

[17] Avram Goldstein, "Does Homework Help? A Review of Research," Elementary School Journal, 60:218, January, 1960.

[18] June G. Mulry, "We Need Research on Homework," NEA Journal, 50:49, April, 1961.

directed studies is both limited and inadequate."[19] Her opinion was that even well-defined studies have been misinterpreted to support preconceived notions about homework. A study by Collins[20] showed that the four types of homework listed by most people as being most helpful were also listed by the largest number of people as being least helpful. Disagreement by parents, teachers, and students in this and other phases of homework led to a strong recommendation for joint study of the problem by the three groups concerned.

From the foregoing studies we have seen that research findings are still conflicting and inconclusive. None of them agree as to the value of homework per se. A summary of recent research on homework was published in March 1967, by the National Education Association. This summary is reproduced in the Appendix.

No doubt the difficulty of controlling the many variables hampers research on this subject. We may safely conclude with the following general statement after viewing what little research has to say about it: The value of homework must lie in a direction other than what can be

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[19]Ruth Strang, Guided Study and Homework (NEA Publication, No. 9. Washington: American Educational Research Association, 1955).

[20]Loyl H. Collins, "A Survey of the Opinions of Parents, Children, and Teachers with Regard to Homework in the Brookwood, Alabama Area" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1953), cited by Esther J. Swenson, "Research on Homework," Journal of Education, 137:21, March 1955.

measured by an achievement test. Perhaps a long-range follow-up study could be made to ascertain how homework influenced the child's preparation for continued learning in college and the establishment of patterns for a well-balanced adult life. It is suggested, too, that after a study of parental opinions such as this paper attempts, a better light may be shed on the effectiveness of work done in the home.

F. SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

Since homework provides an essential link between home and school this survey was made to determine the attitudes and opinions of parents regarding the homework policies presently existing in the Parochial schools of Duluth in grades seven and eight. Undoubtedly a survey of all eight Parochial schools in the city would have provided a more accurate picture of the situation. However it was decided to limit the survey to two schools. In this way the number of questions asked could be increased without making the tabulation and interpretation too unwieldy.

The two schools were chosen on the basis of educational background of parents. One school, at which the author of this questionnaire survey has taught for eight years, is located in a lower economic area in the city. The majority of parents have only a high school education or less. The parents of children in the other school

selected are primarily professional people who were college-educated.

The reactions of parents in other schools would likely differ in some respects since there is no city-wide nor even, in most cases, an individual school policy which determines the amount or kind of homework to be given. It is hoped that this survey might provide a guideline for teachers to assign homework that would best meet the individual needs of their students.

CHAPTER II

TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY

A. SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

The two schools chosen for this survey were selected on the basis of their location within certain socio-economic areas. The purpose of this was to obtain a cross-section of parents with varied educational backgrounds. This result was achieved as is shown in Table II on page 21. The school from the upper middle-class locality will be referred to as "School A" throughout this paper. The school from the lower economic area will be referred to as "School B". Both of these schools have grades one through eight in self-contained classrooms with a certain amount of departmentalization in grades seven and eight.

This questionnaire was to ascertain opinions of parents regarding homework in junior high school. Therefore, questionnaires were given only to parents of seventh and eighth grade students.

B. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions used in the questionnaire were checked against the objectives formulated to make certain that all objectives were covered sufficiently. In its first form,

copies of the questionnaire were given to fellow faculty members, other teachers, and a prominent psychologist. These individuals were asked to check for ambiguous statements, and to make any suggestions which they felt would make the questionnaire a more valid instrument. Their suggestions and recommendations proved to be invaluable. These resulted in several changes so that the questionnaire in its final and present form was considered to be valid.

Parents were asked not to sign their names. This would give them the opportunity to express their true opinions without being evasive or giving "sugar-coated" answers. Parents were also informed that the results of these questionnaires were to be used to help formulate a homework policy for all schools in the Duluth Diocese. This, too, provided an incentive for straightforward responses since their children would ultimately be the ones affected.

C. ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaires were given to parents in the early part of November, 1966. It was supposed that after two months of school, the pattern of homework assignments as to amount and regularity would have been quite well established. It is also a regulation in our school system that, after this first period of the school year, individual parent-teacher conferences be scheduled for all grades. At this conference in both schools each of the parents of the seventh and eighth

grade students was given an envelope and a short verbal interpretation of the survey. The envelope contained a copy of the questionnaire, a letter of explanation and directions, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of the completed questionnaire. Several weeks after the first stated deadline, a follow-up letter was sent. This resulted in a total return of 81 percent. The number of questionnaires distributed and the number returned are shown as follows in Table I:

TABLE I

NUMBER OF HOMEWORK QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED AND RETURNED

		School A	School B	Combined Total
Questionnaires Distributed		83	58	141
Questionnaires Returned	(first)	53	47	114
	(second)	14	0	
Percent returns		81%	81%	81%

The five teachers who distributed the questionnaires stated that all parents accepted them willingly and seemed anxious to cooperate. A copy of the questionnaire, letter of explanation, follow-up letter, and statement made to parents at the time of the distribution will be found in the Appendix.

C. TREATMENT OF THE FINDINGS

As questionnaires were returned, they were divided into three categories according to the educational background of parents. Throughout this paper, these will be referred to as group I, in which both parents have no more than a high school education; group II, in which one parent has more than a high school education, the other has a formal education ending with high school graduation or earlier; group III, in which both parents have education beyond high school. Two returns were incomplete and were, therefore, not included in the tabulation. Twelve questionnaires, four from School A and eight from School B, were from homes where there is only one parent. These were also excluded from the final evaluation since four of the questions required responses from both parents. The remaining one hundred responses were distributed as shown in Table II on page 21.

Thirteen of the fifteen questions included in the questionnaire lent themselves to tabulation. Three "free answer" questions were included to enable parents to express their opinions concerning the value of homework for their child and any other comments they felt to be pertinent.

The number of parents in each category differs. In order to make comparisons, therefore, all tabulations are based on a percentage evaluation. Questions five through eight use two hundred as the number in the sample, since

mother and father were asked to respond separately. All other questions refer to situations and conditions within home and family, so the number in the sample is one hundred.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter will present the results of the questionnaire given to parents of seventh, and eighth grade students in two schools from different socio-economic areas. For greater ease in interpretation each question as stated in the questionnaire will be given along with the tabulation of results.

A. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF PARENTS

As mentioned previously the two schools in the survey were selected because of their location in differing socio-economic areas and the variation in the educational experiences of parents.

In School A almost three-fourths of the parents have had some college education, with 35 percent attaining a college degree. Fathers of the families are the more educated in this group. Forty-one percent of all the fathers are college-educated; 33 percent of the mothers. Slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) of the parents completed their formal education with high school, mothers being the more numerous with 15 percent as compared to 6 percent of the fathers. Only 5 percent of the total number of parents from School A never completed high school.

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE BASED ON EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS

		Percent by school within group					
Group*	Sch.*	Gr. 8 or Less	1-3 yrs. High School	4 yrs. High School	Trade or Business School	1-3 College	4 yrs. College
I* n=60	A n=14	7	7	86			
	B n=46	17	35	48			
II n=54	A n=42	5	5	38	7	29	16
	B n=12	0	17	33	0	50	0
III n=86	A n=70				13	34	53
	B n=16				38	50	12

*Explanation of Groups I, II, III, and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

	Percent by school							
School	Less than 4 yrs. High School		4 yrs. High School		Less than 4 yrs. College		4 yrs. College or more	
	M*	F*	M	F	M	F	M	F
A n=126	2	3	15	6	20	19	13	22
B n=74	11	24	22	12	15	12	2	2

*M=Mother F=Father

In School B the educational picture is almost the reverse of School A. Almost three-fourths (71 percent) of all the parents had no more than a high school education. Thirty-six percent of the fathers are in this group, 24 percent of them never completing high school. About one-fourth (27 percent) of the parents of children in School B had some college education with only 2 percent completing four years. In these two categories the number of fathers and mothers is about equal. Table II on page 21 shows the distribution of the sample.

B. PARENTAL HELP AND SUPERVISION GIVEN TO STUDENTS

1. Subjects in which parents are unable to give help to child. The first question to which the parents were asked to respond was whether there was any school subjects in which they felt unable to give assistance to their child. The distribution of responses is given in Table III on page 25.

Since the "modern" approach to mathematics was introduced in Duluth Parochial schools, parents have repeatedly indicated their lack of understanding of the work their children bring home. In all groups the great majority of parents indicated their inability to help with homework in mathematics.

Taking group I as a whole, where both parents have no more than a high school education, it was noted that help

could not be given in mathematics in twenty-seven out of thirty, or 90 percent of the homes. In groups II and III the response was 82 and 72 percent, respectively. The combined responses from all three groups in School A shows that 77 percent of the parents felt they could give no help in mathematics, while in School B, the combined response showed 93 percent.

When no response was given, it was assumed that the parents considered themselves capable of providing some help in all subjects. In this category the response from groups I, II, and III respectively were 7, 11, and 23 percent. The total number from School A who gave no response was twelve, or 19 percent of the total returns; three, or 8 percent, from School B.

The only other subject in which parents felt they were unable to help their children was in English. However, the number responding here was negligible.

One can conclude from these results that the more education the parents have had, the more assistance they would be able to give children with their homework.

2. Parent who most often assists with homework. "The parental place in a child's education is in the background--but not too far back."[21] Educators agree that the major role of parents in homework is to show interest and provide an environment conducive to study. However, many times a

role of parents in homework is to show interest and provide an environment conducive to study. However, many times a child will ask for assistance of some kind with the assignments he has been given. The next question was asked to determine which parent gives assistance most often when it is asked. Table III on page 25 shows that often it is the mother on whom this responsibility falls.

In group I the task is shared equally by both parents over one-half the time in School A, but in School B the mother is the one asked two-thirds of the time. It is well to remember that in this school, seventeen out of twenty-three fathers never completed high school. Sometimes the father's work may take him out of the home when the child is doing his homework, but it seems that the mother's greater education is an influencing factor. In the other two groups the help given by father, mother, or both, is about the same in both schools. Both parents assume the responsibility in about two-fifths of the homes, mothers only, somewhat less than two-fifths, and fathers have this role in about one-fourth of the homes.

In comparing groups as a whole, the mothers once again take the lead with 57 percent, 37 percent, and 40 percent respectively for groups I, II, and III. The task is shared equally by both parents in about one-third of the homes in each group.

The conclusion arrived at from question one that the

TABLE III

EXTENT OF ASSISTANCE WITH HOMEWORK GIVEN BY PARENTS

1. Is there any subject in which you feel you cannot help this child?

Group*	School*	Percent by school within groups: Mathematics	English	No response
I n=30	A n=7	86	1	-
	B n=23	91	-	9
II n=27	A n=21	76	10	14
	B n=6	100	-	-
III n=43	A n=35	68	6	26
	B n=8	88	-	12
		Percent by Group		
	I	90	3	7
	II	82	7	11
	III	72	5	23
		Percent by School		
	School A n=63	73	8	19
	School B n=37	98	-	2

*Explanation of "Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

TABLE III (continued)

2. When help is given, who usually gives it?

Group	School	Father	Mother	Both equally
		Percent by school within groups		
I n=30	A n=7	14	29	57
	B n=23	13	65	22
II n=27	A n=21	24	33	43
	B n=6	50	50	-
III n=43	A n=35	23	40	37
	B n=8	25	37.5	37.5
		Percent by Group		
	I	10	57	33
	II	30	37	33
	III	23	40	37
	School A n=63	22	37	41
	School B n=37	22	56	22

more education the parents have had, the more capable they are of giving their children assistance, is borne out also by question two as we compare each school as a whole. In School A where the majority of parents are better educated, help is given by both parents equally in 41 percent of the homes as compared to only 22 percent in School B. Mothers are the better educated in School B and in 56 percent of these homes it is the mother who helps the child. Fathers most often give assistance in about one-fifth of the homes in both schools.

3. Parental supervision given to students. Parents were asked to check one of five categories to indicate the frequency with which they inquired and checked the completion of their child's homework. These five were reduced to two for tabulating. "Usually" and "often" responses were grouped as "generally"; "sometimes", "seldom", and "never" were combined under the heading "seldom or never". The tabulated results of these two questions are shown in Table IV on page 28.

From the answers obtained to question three, it would seem that the number one question in most homes in the late afternoon or evening is, "Is your homework finished?" A very high percentage in all three groups of both schools indicated that this question was generally asked. In School B only one parent indicated he "sometimes" questioned the child about his homework. All other responses showed the child was asked

TABLE IV

EXTENT OF SUPERVISION OF HOMEWORK GIVEN BY PARENTS

3. How often do you ask your child what homework he has to do?

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is completed?

Group*	School*	Percent by school within group: Question 3 Generally	Question 3 Seldom or Never	Question 4 Generally	Question 4 Seldom or Never
I n=30	A n=7	86	14	71	29
	B n=23	96	4	74	26
II n=27	A n=21	86	14	76	24
	B n=6	100	-	83	17
III n=43	A n=35	83	17	63	37
	B n=8	100	-	75	25
		Percent by Group			
	I	93	7	73	27
	II	89	11	78	22
	III	86	14	65	35
		Percent by School			
	School A n=63	84	16	68	32
	School B n=37	98	2	76	24

*Explanation of "Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

usually or often. In School A somewhat more than four-fifths of the parents responded that they generally ask the child, but there was a tendency for the better educated parents to ask less often. A possible reason for this will be discussed in a later paragraph.

Responses to question 4 follow much the same pattern with approximately three out of four parents from both schools stating they generally examine their child's homework for completeness. Here again, however, it is the better educated parents of School A who tend to check less often. Fewer than two out of three indicated that checking for completion of homework was a regular occurrence in the home.

Whether or not parents ask their child about homework or check for completion is in itself not an indication of deep interest or lack of interest in the child's school activities. The fact that parents took time to answer the questionnaire is indicative of their concern. The response given to these two questions and also to question 8 (results given in Table VIII on page 42) seems to indicate that parents who have had some college education understand that the value of homework lies in other areas besides the acquisition of knowledge and mastery of skills. Development of good study habits, with an increase of personal responsibility necessary for college work, can be fostered only by means of a gradual decrease in external pressures.

C. OPINIONS OF PARENTS REGARDING AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK

One facet of the homework problem that has often been a subject of controversy is the amount of homework that is best for the child. In terms of academic progress, educators would be better equipped to answer this question. However, the circumstances in which the child does his homework, its immediate effect on him and other members of the family is best known by the parents. It is with this in mind that the next three questions were asked of the parents.

Father and mother were asked to respond separately to these questions. In most cases the response was the same from both parents. In a few instances, however, there was sufficient difference to indicate a variation in thought between father and mother as regards the amount of homework the child has or should have.

1. Parents' reaction to the amount of homework the child brings home. The overall picture given in Table V on page 32 shows that, by far, the majority of parents feel that their children have about the right amount of homework. In group I, 58 percent of both mothers and fathers of School A and about three-fourths of parents in School B indicated this response. Since in this group most of the help with homework is given by mothers one might suspect that the mothers would want no homework. This was not the case, however. Only one mother from each school gave this response while three

fathers (14 percent) all from School B, thought their children should have no homework. There was a significant number of both parents in this group who felt that too much homework was given, fathers of School A taking the lead here with three out of seven as compared to two out of seven mothers of the same school. Parents of School B have a smaller ratio with 14 percent of each of mothers and fathers responding in this manner.

Two reasons might be suggested for the comparatively large number of parents from School B, especially fathers, who feel that their children have too much homework or that there should be no homework. Because of their lesser education, they may have a sense of insecurity in not being able to give the child the assistance or encouragement he needs. Hence they would prefer that the greater portion of the work be done in school under the direction of the teacher. A second suggestion is that the particular children involved may have poor study habits, or are overly conscientious, or are slow students who need more time to accomplish their work. However, delving into these possibilities would constitute a study in itself.

In group II, over 80 percent of both mothers and fathers of School A are in agreement with the amount of homework given. Fourteen percent of both parents feel there is too much, but there are none who think there should be no homework. Exactly half the parents of School B in this

TABLE V

PARENTS' REACTION TO AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK CHILD BRINGS HOME

5. What is your opinion of the amount of homework your child brings home?

Percent by school within group

Group*	Sch.*	Mother: Too Much	Mother: Too Little	Mother: About Right	Mother: No Hmwk.	Father: Too Much	Father: Too Little	Father: About Right	Father: No Hmwk.
I n=60	A n=14	28	0	58	14	42	0	58	0
	B n=46	14	4	78	4	14	0	72	14
II n=54	A n=42	14	4	82	0	14	0	86	0
	B n=12	18	16	50	16	18	16	50	16
III n=86	A n=70	32	8	60	0	18	20	62	0
	B n=16	12	0	88	0	12	12	76	0

Percent by Group

I	16	4	74	6	20	0	70	10
II	14	8	74	4	14	4	78	4
III	28	6	66	0	18	18	64	0

Percent by School

School A n=126	26	6	66	2	20	12	68	0
School B n=74	14	6	74	6	16	6	68	10

*Explanation of Groups I, II, III and Schools A and B is given on pages 15 and 18.

group think the amount of homework is "about right," with only one mother and one father checking each of the other three categories.

The picture changes somewhat as we look at group III. Still a rather high percentage of both mothers and fathers (60 percent and 62 percent from School A; 88 percent and 76 percent from School B, respectively) agree with the amount of homework. The number of parents in School A who believe their children have too much homework (32 percent of the mothers, 18 percent of the fathers), and, contrariwise, those who feel their children have too little homework (8 percent of the mothers; 20 percent of the fathers) is sufficient to warrant a closer study of the homework policy by the school staff. Results such as this would strongly support a more individualized homework program. In School B only one mother and two fathers indicated their children have too much or too little homework. This seems to show that parents feel their children's educational needs are being met adequately. Consideration must also be given to the possibility of the influence of a lower economic area. Parents have greater financial problems and tend to be more docile in accepting the solutions to educational problems by school authorities.

In comparing the three groups as a whole, one significant finding, other than what has been mentioned previously, is demonstrated. All the better educated parents seem to

agree that homework has an important place in their children's education since none of them advocated a "no homework" policy.

2. Parents' opinions as to the amount of time per day a student should spend on homework.

Although several parents indicated in question 5 that they preferred no homework for their children, they apparently believe that homework is inevitable. No mothers and only three fathers in the entire sample stated they felt students should have less than one-half hour or no homework daily. Most parents checked one of two columns indicating daily homework time ranging from one-half to two hours. Results are shown in Table VI on page 35.

In group I School A, mothers were evenly divided between suggesting one to two hours and one-half to one hour of homework; fathers favored one to two hours (58 percent). In School B both mothers and fathers advocated only one-half to one hour of work (74 percent and 58 percent respectively).

In group II School A, 54 percent of the fathers wanted one to two hours of homework for their children, compared to 42 percent of the mothers. Conversely, 42 percent of the fathers preferred one-half to one hour, compared to 54 percent of the mothers. In School B, two-thirds of both fathers and mothers felt that one-half to one hour of work daily was sufficient.

TABLE VI

PARENTS' OPINIONS OF AMOUNT OF TIME PER DAY STUDENT SHOULD SPEND ON HOMEWORK

6. How much time do you think a student in junior high should spend on homework each day?

Percent by school within group

Group*	Sch.*	Mother 2-3 hr.	Mother 1-2 hr.	Mother ½-2 hr.	Mother Less than ½hr.-none	Father 2-3 hr.	Father 1-2 hr.	Father ½-1 hr.	Father Less than ½hr.-none
I n=60	A n=14	16	42	42	0	16	58	26	0
	B n=46	8	18	74	0	8	30	58	4
II n=54	A n=42	4	42	54	0	0	54	42	4
	B n=12	0	34	66	0	0	34	66	0
III n=86	A n=70	6	66	28	0	14	62	22	2
	B n=16	0	76	24	0	0	76	24	0

Percent by Group

I	10	24	66	0	10	36	50	4
II	4	40	56	0	0	52	44	4
III	4	70	26	0	12	62	24	2

Percent by School

School A n=126	6	56	38	0	10	58	28	4
School B n=74	4	32	64	0	4	40	54	2

*Explanation of "Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

The tendency toward less homework shifts as we look at group III. Two-thirds of both mothers and fathers of School A advocated one to two hours daily, while 28 percent and 22 percent of mothers and fathers respectively advocated the lesser amount. Fourteen percent of the fathers even felt that a junior high student should spend two to three hours a day on homework; 6 percent of the mothers giving this response. In School B both parents were equally emphatic (76 percent) in suggesting one to two hours daily.

Comparison of the three groups as a whole shows that the extent of education the parents have had determines to a degree the amount of work they expect of their children. In groups I, II, and III, 24 percent, 40 percent, and 70 percent, respectively, of the mothers indicated that one to two hours of homework a day was about right. Fathers were somewhat more adamant with 36 percent, 52 percent, and 62 percent respectively, giving this response. Twelve percent of the fathers of group III suggested that two to three hours per day should be required. Three of these five fathers had indicated in a previous question that they felt their children had too little homework. Ten percent of both mothers and fathers of group I also indicated that two to three hours per day was the right amount. In all of these cases the parents had indicated previously that the amount of homework their children brought home was "about right". Apparently these children just need more time to complete their work.

In addition to the education of the parents, the economic situation might also be a factor influencing parental opinion particularly in School B. The majority of mothers and fathers of School A (56 percent and 58 percent respectively) preferred one to two hours of homework daily. In School B the majority of parents (64 percent of the mothers, 54 percent of the fathers) felt that one-half to one hour would suffice. The conditions under which the children do their homework and materials available to them will be discussed on page 45.

3. Parents' opinions as to frequency with which homework should be assigned. In addition to the amount of time to be spent on homework each day, parents were asked their opinion concerning how often during the week homework should be assigned. Table VII on page 38 shows that in all three groups of both schools parents strongly supported the practice of their children having homework every school night. The number advocating this ranged from 62 percent to 88 percent with no appreciable difference between the opinions of fathers as compared to mothers. A smaller number ranging from 6 percent of the better educated parents of School A to 30 percent of the lesser educated parents of School B preferred homework only once or twice a week. Of the entire sample, only eight parents, (four mothers and three fathers of School A; one father of School B), advocated a policy of

TABLE VII

PARENTS' OPINIONS AS TO FREQUENCY WITH WHICH HOMEWORK SHOULD BE ASSIGNED

7. How often do you think homework should be given to junior high students?

Percent by school within group

Group*	Sch.*	Mother: 1-2 times weekly	Mother: Every school night	Mother: Sch. nts. and weekends	Mother: none	Father: 1-2 times weekly	Father: Every school night	Father: Sch. nts. and weekends	Father: none
I n=60	A n=14	28	72	0	0	28	72	0	0
	B n=46	30	70	0	0	22	74	0	4
II n=54	A n=42	14	76	10	0	20	76	4	0
	B n=12	16	84	0	0	16	84	0	0
III n=86	A n=70	6	88	6	0	6	88	6	0
	B n=16	24	76	0	0	24	62	14	0
Percent by Group									
	I	30	70	0	0	24	72	0	4
	II	14	78	8	0	18	78	4	0
	III	8	88	4	0	8	86	6	0
Percent by School									
School A n=126		14	80	6	0	16	40	4	0
School B n=74		26	74	0	0	22	74	2	2

*Explanation of #Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

homework on weekends as well as on school days.

Comparison of the three groups shows that parents with less education tend to want less homework for their children; parents with more education tend to want more homework. Since responses of fathers and mothers were almost identical, they are grouped as one unit in this interpretation. In groups I, II, and III, the parents who preferred homework every school night were 72 percent, 78 percent, and 87 percent respectively. Those who advocated a policy of homework once or twice a week were 27 percent, 16 percent, and 8 percent, respectively, in the three groups. Suggested reasons for these tendencies have been discussed previously.

The responses given by the parents to this question echoes the statement made by an educator, "Our adult society anticipates a respite from daily work when the weekend rolls around. Why should a child be given responsibilities beyond what an adult expects or enjoys?"[22]

D. OPINIONS OF PARENTS REGARDING VALUE OF HOMEWORK

As noted in the previous question, parents are better qualified than anyone else to determine the worth of homework as determined by its immediate effects on the child. In view of this, three questions were asked of them. Question 8 refers to the value of homework in general. Questions

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[22]Waldemar Olson, "Homework--Friend or Foe to Children?" The Instructor, 71:6, January, 1962.

thirteen and fourteen were open-end questions in which parents were asked to state specifically the kinds of homework which were of great value or no value. Tabulated responses for question eight are shown in Table VIII on page 42.

1. General value. In question eight parents were asked to check one of the five following categories:

a) All homework is important if he is to get a good education.

b) Part of the homework is important but not all of it.

c) Homework is not important but if he wants to get good marks he should do it.

d) Homework is not important and I don't care if he does it or not.

e) Homework keeps him busy at night and out of mischief.

The great majority of parents checked one of the first two choices. Of the entire sample, only five, two mothers and three fathers, (2 from School A, 3 from School B) indicated an opinion that homework was not important except to obtain good grades. No one checked statement four, and only two mothers stated as a second choice that homework had value in keeping the child busy and out of mischief.

Parents' opinions of the value of homework appear to be influenced equally as much by economic environment as by

educational background. In all three groups, School B had the greater number of parents who felt that all the homework their children had was important. Those who responded thus comprised 90 percent, 76 percent, and 100 percent of the total responses from School B in groups I, II, and III respectively. From School A the numbers were 50 percent, 71 percent, and 50 percent.

Comparison of the three groups as a whole shows that lesser educated parents tend to accept the importance of all homework without question. Eighty-one percent of the parents in group I gave this response. Although the majority (59 percent) of better educated parents (group III) feel that all homework is important, 40 percent checked the qualifying statement that part of the homework is important but not all of it.

Comparison of the two schools once again brings out the economic influence. Slightly more than half the parents (57 percent) of School A stated that all homework is important as compared to 90 percent of the parents of School B. Conversely, 41 percent of the parents of School A felt that only part of the homework was important, while only 6 percent from School B stated this. Apparently those from a lower economic area are more inclined to accept the decisions of the school in regard to homework without question. This places a greater responsibility on the school authorities to try to set up a school program which would be of greatest

TABLE VIII

PARENTS' OPINIONS AS TO VALUE OF HOMEWORK

6. What is your opinion in regard to the value of the homework your child has?

Group*	Sch.*	Mother: All imp.	Mother: Part imp.	Mother: Imp. only for marks	Father: All imp.	Father: Part imp.	Father: Imp. only for marks
		Percent by school within group					
I n=60	A n=14	58	42	0	42	42	16
	B n=46	92	8	0	88	8	4
II n=54	A n=42	76	24	0	66	34	0
	B n=12	84	0	16	68	16	16
III n=86	A n=70	50	46	4	50	50	0
	B n=16	100	0	0	100	0	0
		Percent by Group					
	I	84	16	0	78	16	6
	II	78	18	4	66	32	4
	III	60	38	2	58	42	0
		Percent by School					
School A n=126		60	38	2	54	44	2
School B n=74		92	4	4	88	8	4

*Explanation of "Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

benefit to the child.

2. Specific value. Questions thirteen and fourteen of the survey were open-end questions in which parents were free to express their opinions. In question thirteen parents were asked, "Is there any particular type of homework your child has that you feel is doing him no good?" Most of the parents agreed that the majority of assignments were beneficial. Seventy-seven out of one hundred concurred with this opinion. It is interesting to note that here again most of the parents who never questioned the value of homework were from School B in the lower economic area. Thirty-four out of the 37 parents of this school indicated all homework was beneficial. One-third of the parents in School A stated kinds of homework which they felt was of no benefit to their children. Analyzing the value of homework gave their statements more validity than the mere acknowledgement of its worth. Statements such as the following are indicative of their reaction. These items were listed as having no value as homework assignments:

Modern math which the student did not understand
Cutting out pictures and articles from magazines
Work that requires constant supervision and assistance
Art work and scrapbook making
Projects covering too large an area
Busy work for the sake of having homework
Writing misspelled words 100 times
Homework given as punishment
Work without having been explained

In summarizing the results to this question one must conclude

that most parents feel that homework does have value and is worthwhile. It is helpful to the teacher to see what kinds, as listed above, seem most useless for the child's progress in achievement.

To stress the positive side of this study, the next question asked of the parents was, "Is there any particular type of homework your child has that you feel benefits him greatly?"

Twenty percent of the parents from School A, 40 percent from School B stated that homework was beneficial, but there was no particular kind that benefitted the child greatly. Ten percent from School A, 30 percent from School B stated that all homework is of great benefit. The economic influence is again noted here. The remaining participants qualified their statements and isolated specific examples of what kind was of most benefit to their child. They are grouped into categories for clarification and arranged according to the number of times they were indicated. The most frequent opinions are listed first.

1. Reading (This may be subdivided into book reports, using reference materials, research, newspaper assignments, history readings.)
2. Writing (compositions, essays, making outlines)
3. Science projects
4. Mathematics

Of all the parents who gave specific examples, 67 percent from School A and 82 percent from School B listed work in the area of reading. Creative writing and outlining were

second in both schools with 33 percent and 9 percent responding in this way from Schools A and B respectively. A few remaining parents cited science projects and mathematics as their choice for purposeful homework areas.

In most of the answers to the question it is indicated that the parents have a knowledge of what is good and what is bad in the scope of homework. To educators it should be significant that the area of Language Arts was designated by the parents as being the most beneficial for homework assignments. In this Language Arts area Reading was singled out as the one facet producing the greatest value. One must discern from this that the importance of teaching independent reading skills must never be minimized.

E. ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH STUDENTS DO HOMEWORK

An important factor a teacher should take into consideration when assigning homework is the home environment. The physical surroundings in which a child does his homework, the time he has to do it, and the reference materials he has at home may be either a help or a hindrance to the successful completion of a homework assignment. Questions nine through twelve of the survey were asked to obtain a general idea of what is available to the child in these three areas.

1. Time. Table IX on page 46 shows that two-thirds of the families of School A (67 percent) and almost one-half

TABLE IX

HOME ENVIRONMENT--TIME FOR DOING HOMEWORK

9. Do you have a definite time set aside every school night as a quiet "study time" for the child?

10. If "yes", is this time quiet for the whole family?

		Percent by school within group			
		Question 9		Question 10	
Group*	School*	Yes	No	Yes	No
I n=30	A n=7	57	43	25	75
	B n=23	35	65	12	88
II n=27	A n=21	76	24	50	50
	B n=6	67	33	25	75
	A n=35	63	37	36	64
	B n=8	63	37	20	80
		Percent by Group			
	I	40	60	17	83
	II	74	26	45	55
	III	63	37	33	67
		Percent by School			
	School A n=63	67	33	41	59
	School B n=37	46	54	18	82

*Explanation of "Groups I, II, III" and "Schools A and B" is given on pages 15 and 18.

of the families of School B (46 percent) do have a definite time set aside every school night as a quiet "study time" for the child. Of these, 41 percent from School A and 18 percent from School B have this time quiet for the whole family with no radio or television on. No attempt was made to determine whether the "study time" was adhered to for the purpose of reading or pursuing individual interests if the child had no assigned homework on a school night.

As might be expected a greater number of families from group III (63 percent of each school) had a definite time each day for homework than from group I (57 percent and 35 percent of Schools A and B respectively). A possible reason for this might be similar to the conclusion arrived at in question 8 that the parents in the lower economic area tend to leave the problems of their child's education more completely in the hands of the educators.

2. Place. The economic condition of families determines to a great extent the type of housing they have. Hence, it is the economic factor which exerts the greatest influence on the room available in the home for the child to do his homework. In School A, where the majority of families are in the higher economic class, 61 percent of the students generally study in their own bedroom. The dining room and living room are the next most used areas with 14 percent and 13 percent respectively. The room most used for homework by

children from School B is the kitchen. Almost half (46 percent) of the School B respondents stated this. The next most often used were the child's bedroom (26 percent) and the dining room (16 percent). The complete results are shown in summary form as follows in Table X.

TABLE X

HOME ENVIRONMENT--PLACE FOR DOING HOMEWORK

11. Where does your child usually do his homework?

	Percent by School				
	Bedroom	Living room	Kitchen	Dining room	Den
School A n=77	61	13	9	14	3
School B n=50	26	12	46	16	0

3. Materials available. In question 12 of the survey parents were asked to check whether they had a dictionary and/or a set of encyclopedias in the home to help the child with his homework, and to list other books or materials at home that the child could use for reference work. Here, again, the economic situation of the family is the determining factor to a great extent. Every family from both schools indicated that they had a dictionary at home. A set of encyclopedias was available in 92 percent of the homes of School A and 70 percent of the homes of School B. Other reference

materials listed were many and varied. Seventy percent of the families of School A and 38 percent of School B stated they had such materials at home for the use of the child. It was noteworthy that of the 38 percent in School B, one-half of these were parents in the more educated group. Perhaps their greater education makes them more aware of the need for a variety of materials to supplement school texts. Some of the supplementary materials listed were: atlas, globe, National Geographic Magazine, current news magazines, home libraries.

Deductions arrived at from the study of the results of these three questions forces the school personnel to recognize how important a facet home environment must be in determining a homework policy.

F. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY PARENTS

Comments made by parents were varied and meaningful. In the arguments pro and con for homework, there are generally four or five main categories where most of the arguments fall in line. Comments from parents of these two schools were no exception to the general statements made regarding homework during the past fifteen years.

Appearing most frequently was the comment asking that assignments be spaced equally as to the amount of time it takes for completion. Twenty-five percent of the statements made by School A parents and 14 percent made by School B

parents indicated this. They deplored requirements of "three hours one night and fifteen minutes the next night."

Another interesting fact was that in School B, where most parents have only a high school education or less, 23 percent of the comments had reference to a positive value of homework, that of aiding home-school relationships. Such comments as, "Parents have a chance to review work," "Homework aids parents to see the child's problems," and "Parents feel frustrated when they can't help," were given. A suggestion which constituted 14 percent of the School B responses was to lengthen the school day so that all homework could be done under the supervision of the teachers. These responses are in accordance with conclusions previously arrived at that parents of this school, because of their educational inadequacies, tend to accept unquestioningly the decisions of school authorities. None of the responses from parents in School A reflected either of these two opinions.

Many comments of parents from School A were more abstract in nature dealing with reasons why homework is given. They also tended to be more critical in nature. Remarks ranged from the general statement, "Homework is good for children," to the specific suggestion, "Demand should not be made for homework of an A or B student if he is absent due to illness." Twenty-five percent of the School A responses were objections to the use of homework as punishment or busywork. The majority of these comments were from parents who

responded in question 8 that part of their child's homework was important but not all of it. Other comments made by these parents, chosen at random, are as follows:

"Homework is a good preparation for higher learning."

"Child should have more time for outside activities such as music lessons."

"Homework is not always understood."

"When homework becomes a drudgery, it loses its effectiveness."

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

A. CONCLUSIONS

This questionnaire resulted in some definite reactions to the present practice of homework by parents of children in two schools. The schools were in two distinct socio-economic areas--one of higher and one of lower economic circumstances. Although the findings apply only to these two schools, it is hoped that the results may be typical of parents in other levels of society and education. The major conclusions obtained through the survey are summarized below.

1. Parents with higher education tend to want more homework for their children while parents with lesser education wanted less homework for their children.

2. Both parents in the better educated group indicated their ability to help their children in all areas except mathematics. The mother of the family in the lesser educated group helped the child the most with his homework.

3. Personal supervision given to children by parents was more exacting in the less educated group. Parents of higher educational advantages used less external control.

4. The more educated parents suggested one to two hours of homework per night. The less educated parents deemed one-half to one hour sufficient.

5. The majority of parents in all three groups thought homework should be given every night of the school week but not on weekends.

6. Most parents from School B felt that all homework is important. School A parents were more inclined to accept the importance of only part of their child's homework.

7. As to the child's immediate environment in which he does his homework, the economic influence is noted. Most parents from School A stated the child worked in his own bedroom. Children from School B most often used the kitchen.

8. All families from both schools afforded dictionaries for reference. The vast majority of homes have encyclopedias. The better educated parents provided a greater variety of reference materials.

9. Parents chose the area of Language Arts as the most important area for homework assignments.

10. The type of homework benefitting the child least was that in which he had no workable knowledge of how to do it and no immediate satisfaction of a task well executed. These assignments usually demanded full time participation of the parent.

11. It is imperative that school authorities know the home environment of their pupils before determining homework policies.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was limited to the opinions of parents regarding the provocative issue of homework. The problem of homework with all its various facets was not resolved but we hope that the waters are not as muddy in this area as they once were. Problems are not resolved with a questionnaire survey but the channels for a solution are opened. Basically the problem of understanding other people's viewpoints is a breakthrough and this we feel was accomplished in this study.

After examining the results of this survey, it might

be suggested that a diocesan policy be established stating that each school develop its own homework policy. After a study of home conditions and discussions with parents, a policy would be written and publicized stating the purposes and goals of homework. This policy should be flexible enough to be adapted to individual situations and should be re-evaluated frequently. Within this framework a major recommendation that teachers plan homework assignments so that extremes of overloading one day and no assignments the next day, be avoided. Also unanimously recommended was that no homework be given over weekends. A definite and knowledgeable assignment would also be appreciated by parents wherein the child could complete the homework without parental help.

This questionnaire was also valuable in unearthing some possibilities for further research. As comments of parents were more closely analyzed, a major problem came into focus. Each child is an individual with his own peculiar needs. With the stress today on individualized instruction, studies could be done to determine what type of homework would best benefit what kind of child. Another area of study might be a comparison of intelligence with the amount of time needed for homework or if homework is needed at all.

It is hoped that with the guidance of parents' opinions, administrators and teachers will keep homework within the reasonable bounds of relevancy and usefulness to each student.

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APPENDIX

A SURVEY OF THE HOMEWORK PROBLEM

Please answer the following questions by checking the appropriate space.

I. 1. Will you please indicate the extent of your educational experiences.

Mother		Father
_____	.....Grade 8 or less.....	_____
	Attended high school	
_____	..... one year	_____
_____	..... two years	_____
_____	..... three years	_____
_____	..... four years	_____
_____	..... trade school	_____
_____	..... business school	_____
	Attended College	
_____	..... one year	_____
_____	..... two years	_____
_____	..... three years	_____
_____	..... four years	_____

_____Degrees earned (please indicate)_____

2. If continuing your education, what training or courses are you now taking?

Please describe. Father _____

Mother _____

II. If you have more than one child in this school, please answer the following questions in regard to the oldest child only.

1. Is there any subject in which you feel you cannot help this child?

   Please indicate _____

2. When help is given, who usually gives it?

   Father _____ Mother _____

3. How often do you ask your child what homework he has to do?

   _____Usually _____Seldom

   _____Often _____Never

   _____Sometimes

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is completed?

   _____Usually _____Seldom

   _____Often _____Never

   _____Sometimes

5. What is your opinion of the amount of homework your child brings home?

Mother		Father
_____	..... Too much	_____
_____	..... Too little	_____
_____	..... About right	_____
_____	..Think there should be no homework..	_____

6. How much time do you think a student in Junior high should spend on homework each day?

Mother		Father
_____	2-3 hours	_____
_____	1-2 hours	_____
_____	1/2-1 hour	_____
_____	Less than 1/2 hour	_____
_____	None	_____

7. How often do you think homework should be given to junior high students?

Mother		Father
_____	once or twice a week	_____
_____	every school night	_____
_____	school nights and weekends	_____

8. What is your opinion in regard to the value of the homework your child has? (Check one or two items)

Mother	Father	
_____	_____	All homework is important if he is to get a good education.
_____	_____	Part of the homework is important but not all of it.
_____	_____	Homework is not important but if he wants to get good marks he should do it.
_____	_____	Homework is not important and I don't care if he does it or not.
_____	_____	Homework keeps him busy at night and out of mischief.

9. Do you have a definite time set aside every school night as a quiet "study time" for the child?

_____ yes _____ no

10. If the answer is "yes", is this time quiet for the whole family without any radio or television on?

_____ yes _____ no

11. Where does your child usually do his homework?

_____ his bedroom

_____ living room

_____ kitchen

_____ other (please indicate)

12. Check which of the following you have at home to help your child with his work.

_____ set of encyclopedias

_____ dictionary

_____ other books or materials that can be used for reference work. Please list.

_____

_____ none at all.

13. Is there any particular type of homework your child has that you feel is doing him no good? (explain)

_____

_____

14. Is there any particular type of homework your child has that you feel benefits him greatly? (explain)

_____

_____

Please feel free to make any further comments regarding your child's homework.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Duluth, Minnesota 55806

Dear Parents:

I am sure you will agree with me that homework has often been a problem not only to the children but also to you, the parents. As part of a requirement for a Master's Degree in Education, I have decided to take a closer look at this problem, but I need your help. It will take but a few moments of your time. The results of this study will be used to try to develop a Diocesan homework policy that will be of the greatest benefit to your children.

Do <u>not</u> sign your name. Please be very honest in expressing your opinions. After completing this questionnaire, simply place it in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope and drop it in a mailbox.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)
Sister Vianney, O.S.B.
Principal

Please send returns by November 23.

Follow-up Letter Sent to Parents.

Duluth, Minnesota 55806

Dear Parents:

Some time ago you were asked to fill out a copy of the enclosed questionnaire giving your views and opinions of several different aspects of your child's homework. Many of you have responded. But to make a valid evaluation of the problem, a more complete picture of parental opinions is necessary.

If you have already returned your questionnaire, please disregard this reminder. If you have not, would you kindly take a few moments of your time and send this valuable information?

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)
Sister Vianney, O.S.B.
Principal

Statement Made to Parents
at Time of Distribution.

Our school has been asked to cooperate in a Diocesan survey of the opinions of parents of seventh and eighth grade students in regard to homework. The questionnaire and information regarding it are in this envelope. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

Homework

WHAT GOOD IS HOMEWORK? DOES IT have any educational value? Is it a necessary evil? Or can it be an interesting and stimulating extension of classwork? What kinds of homework are best? How much? For whom? At what grade levels?

Opinions differ, research is limited, and results are inconclusive. Most studies have not controlled or explored the influence of such variables as individual ability, type of assignment, grade level, and course of study.

The Case For

Proponents believe homework may be valuable in advancing learning of specific tasks and in enhancing and enriching the learning process in general. They contend that home assignments:

- Allow students to complete unfinished class assignments and to make up work missed during absences
- Reinforce what was learned in the classroom
- Provide opportunity for study projects which supplement material studied in the classroom
- Provide a background for classroom learning
- Enrich the classroom experience by relating what has been learned in the classroom to everyday problem-solving situations
- Help the pupil to develop initiative, independence, self-discipline, and responsibility
- Help the pupil to develop permanent leisure interests in learning.

The Case Against

Current opposition to homework seems to center not on the question of homework versus no homework, but on what the homework practice involves. Those who question present practices argue that homework:

- Often leaves little time for other worthwhile activities outside the classroom
- May reduce the pupil's interest and enthusiasm for school, and may lead to dislike of school
- Often is done by parents or copied from other pupils
- Is usually geared to the "average" pupil, while individual differences are not taken into account
- Necessitates additional time for planning, evaluating, and record-keeping
- Lacks planning, with the result that a pupil may be loaded with heavy assignments from several teachers on the same day and have no assignments on another day.

Many Types of Homework

The many kinds of homework assignments are designed to help pupils develop a variety of study skills.

Reading assignments may supplement classroom discussion and are often closely connected with examinations.

Written homework enables the pupil to apply and combine the skills being developed, and allows the teacher to judge each pupil's knowledge and his ability to communicate this knowledge.

Drill, which is most often criticized, may be a useful tool in mastery of skills in some subjects (e.g., grammar, mathematics, and foreign language).

Long-term projects require that knowledge be put to practical use in problem solving.

The need for *individualized home assignments* is becoming increasingly recognized, but infrequently practiced. However, one study reported that 64 percent of 28 responding school systems recommended differences in homework "loads" for pupils of low, average, or high ability.

Practices Vary with Grade Level

Generally, the purpose of homework in the elementary grades is to give the child experience in following directions, enjoyment in using skills being learned, and practice with new skills. Time required for the assignment should begin with only a few minutes nightly in the first grade, increasing gradually as the child progresses through elementary school.

In the junior high school one purpose of homework is to help pupils develop techniques of individual study. Suggested nightly time requirements are from one hour in the seventh grade to one and one-half to two hours in the ninth grade.

Homework assignments in high school should vary with the needs of the individual student. For example, college-bound students need to develop habits of independent study and to have a wide background of knowledge; they should expect heavy homework loads.

That some students have heavy responsibilities at home or hold part-time jobs, often a valuable educational experience in itself, should be taken into account when assignments are made.

Written Policy Recommended

Many educators suggest that every school have a written (and publicized) policy stating its purposes and goals of homework. The policy should be flexible enough to meet individual situations and should be re-evaluated and revised frequently.

Teacher's Role Important

Persons writing about homework suggest that teachers accept the responsibility for making pupils understand not just *what* is to be done, but *why* and *how* it should be done. The assignment must have a legitimate educational goal; it should never be used as punishment. In addition, the teacher should:

- Vary the type of homework assigned
- Remember that assignments which call for initiative and imagination discourage copying
- Plan assignments which provide for individual differences
- Avoid assignments which might give parents the responsibility for teaching
- Evaluate and return each assignment to the pupils
- Consider the total homework load of the pupils, special school activities, weekends, and holidays.

Parents Can Help, Too

Parents can help to make homework a worthwhile and satisfying experience for their children by:

- Expressing interest in and support for the work and projects the child brings home, without doing the work for him
- Encouraging the child, stimulating his thinking, and helping him to understand more abstract concepts
- Providing a quiet, well-lighted study environment in the home
- Assisting in drill and memorization
- Informing the teacher of individual difficulties.

For details see: National Education Association, Research Division. *Homework.* Research Summary 1966-S2. Washington, D. C.: the Association, 1966. 12 p. 30¢. Stock #434-22804.
