

## **Homework: Is It Really Necessary?**

**By: Linda Massucci, M.S. Remedial Reading**

**Tricia Terrance, M.S. Remedial Reading**

The debate over homework can become very intense when discussed amongst opposing sides. When we were asked to write an article about the issue, our first plan was to do a little research on the pros and cons of assigning homework and then, through logical reasoning, decide which side has the best evidence to support their stand on homework. The problem arose when research for and against homework were equally strong!

The first article that caught our attention was 'Too Much Homework Can Be Counterproductive' (May 2005) from the Social Science Research Institute at PENN State. In this article, Dr. LeTendre, an associate professor of education, believes if a teacher assigns homework than the teacher is assuming the child has a home environment that is supportive to learning. His research also concluded that when families are unequal in this supportive task, it only increases the inequality of education among our children. He adds the teacher's focus for assigning the homework should be that of its instructional quality and providing everyone an equal access to an opportunity to learn. And, let's not forget how many parents who are extremely busy with work and chauffeuring children to extracurricular activities may view homework as unnecessary drill and memorization exercises and an intrusion into family time.

In 2003, the Brown Center Report on American Education addressed concerns about this topic in an article titled 'Do Students Have Too Much Homework?' The article reminds parents to understand the amount of homework will fluctuate depending on their child's grade level and what is being studied. Also, some children will use their study hall productively and other students may prefer to socialize at school and be more productive at home when completing assignments. The center also addresses the mistake of placing a certain amount of time an assignment may take to complete, instead of trying to standardize the content of the schoolwork. An example of this would be reading this article: you may read this article in two minutes and your spouse may take three minutes, but you will be receiving the same content. The article concludes with the importance of the parent and teacher working together to assess what would be an appropriate homework load for the child.

Our final, and hopefully helpful, suggestion dealing with the homework issue comes from Harris Cooper, 'The Battle Over Homework: Common Ground for Administrators, Teachers and Parents' (Corwin Press, 2001). From this research, a parent can easily remember that homework should be 10 minutes per grade. An example would be 30 minutes a night for third graders and 80 minutes a night for eighth graders. From this 'rule of thumb' however, a parent must remember that homework assignments may vary at times due to subject material and the course level your child is assigned.

The arrival of February vacation is approaching and hopefully your child will have a rest from the homework assignments! Here are a few activities you may enjoy doing together:

### **Microwave Playdough**

1 cup flour  
½ cup salt  
1 cup water  
1 tablespoon oil  
2 teaspoons cream of tartar  
Use Kool-Aid for color (non-sweet)  
Mix all ingredients together, microwave for 1 ½ minutes, stir then microwave for another minute. Place on board to cool. Knead well. Keep in closed container.

### **Snow Designs**

1 cup water  
3-5 drops of food coloring  
Mix into spray bottle. Add more food coloring for a darker color. Child can spray designs, letters, shapes and/or write name on the snow.

### **Arts and Crafts**

Visit your local art supply store and look for hands-on crafts such as create your own sun catcher, paint or color by number, jewelry making, t-shirt designs, etc.

Linda Massucci and Tricia Terrance hold master's degrees in remedial reading. If you have any topics/questions you would like addressed in future articles, please send an e-mail to Linda & Tricia at [LINDAMASSUCCI@aol.com](mailto:LINDAMASSUCCI@aol.com).

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