

TX on the 'NET

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Homework has gotten way out of hand

I look forward to summer for one reason: freedom. It's the only time I have that someone isn't dictating my every move, telling me what I should try to learn and sucking up my leisure time with how I should learn it.

My excitement for this summer was unrivaled. Thoughts of everything I could accomplish danced in my head until a comment last school year from my English teacher sent a bolt of lightning through my ears and caused a thundercloud so dark it has clouded my positive thoughts ever since.

My teacher informed us that each student in our school district was required to read one book over the summer from an approved reading list and be prepared for a test at the beginning of the school year. What!? No, no, no, no, no, no! My dreams of reading the Harry Potter series with my sister and all the lovely, not-approved books I wanted crashed into a brick wall and landed in a pile of unrecognizable trash.

Why can't they just let people who want to read, read what they would like to read for once? That's when I decided schools really need to put a limit on this thing. Homework has gotten way too



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out of hand. It eats up nine months of my life and now it's starting to chew holes into the rest of them.

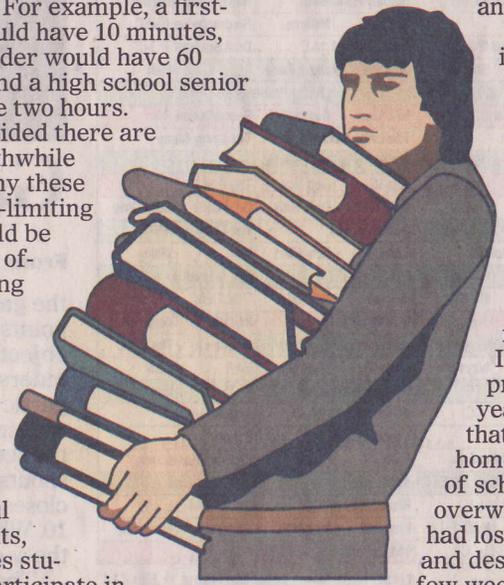
As I've thought about my homework dilemma, I've learned about some school districts across the nation that have passed policies limiting homework. The Los Angeles Unified School District in California recently enacted a policy requiring that only 10 percent of a student's grade can be based on homework. The amount of homework isn't diminished, but the weight it plays on a student's grade is considerably smaller.

In New Jersey, the Galloway Township School District might limit homework in a different way. The amount of homework a student would have every day would be 10 minutes multiplied by the student's grade level, and no homework would be assigned on

weekends. For example, a first-grader would have 10 minutes, a sixth-grader would have 60 minutes, and a high school senior would have two hours.

I've decided there are many worthwhile reasons why these homework-limiting ideas should be used more often. Limiting homework increases and prolongs the desire to learn, encourages more meaningful assignments, and enables students to participate in extracurricular activities and be involved in their community.

By limiting homework, students are more excited to learn and that desire actually lasts longer. Recently, I spent four days at an archaeology camp in Nine-Mile Canyon learning how to use compasses, topographic maps and UTMs (a geographical coordinate system), and learning about geology and



anthropology.

I was so intrigued about everything and hopping with excitement. Thinking about my experience, I realized how educational everything was and wondered why I enjoyed it so much while I had hated the previous school year. I concluded that all the homework and tests of school had been so overwhelming that I had lost all enjoyment and desire to learn. The few weeks of summer brought my excitement

back and I was able to learn so much at this camp because of that. So if less homework is assigned, students will retain their excitement about learning and, consequently, learn more.

Having less homework will also increase the meaning of the assignments that are given. The homework given will be better quality and more likely to help

students understand key concepts. Right now, assignments are handed out like candy on Halloween and few of them are productive. By decreasing the amount of homework, one can also decrease the amount of busy work. This allows us to stop beating around the bush and actually get some effective learning done.

The less homework students are given, the more they can take advantage of extracurricular activities and be involved in their community. Extracurricular activities and service in our cities and neighborhoods are good ways for students to learn new skills they would otherwise not develop. It allows the student to become well-rounded and achieve success in many different areas of life. Too much homework limits these opportunities because students have to spend this time on all their schoolwork instead.

If you want better results in the classroom, start with the homework. Feed it to the dog before you assign it.

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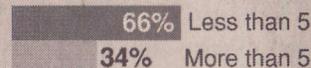
BRIEFING

Homework burden a myth

Studies show that the average amount of time spent on homework has not increased over the years.



In 2002, college freshman were asked: During your last year of high school, how many hours did you spend in a typical week doing homework?



Percentage of students in a separate survey who spent less than an hour on homework in a day

YEAR	AGE: 9	13	17
1999	79%	61%	52%
1984	77%	59%	48%

SOURCES: Higher Education Research AP Institute; National Assessment of Educational Progress

Students not bogged down with homework

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON – It's a troubling story: Public school students get so loaded with homework that they stress out and lose out on chances to be playful kids.

But that story is largely wrong, two new studies contend.

Most students actually have less than an hour of homework a night, said Tom Loveless, director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at The Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. Compelling anecdotes of overwhelmed kids and exasperated parents don't reflect what most families face, according to a Brookings analysis of a broad range of homework research.

"People are unduly alarmed over the amount of homework," Loveless said. "They should realize kids are not overworked – and indeed, there is room for even more work."

The Brookings report is based on widely cited data from the Education Department, international surveys and research by the University of Michigan and UCLA, among other sources.

For example, when asked how much

homework they were assigned the day before, most students age 9, 13 and 17 all reported less than an hour, according to a federal long-term survey in 1999. The share of students assigned more than an hour of homework has dropped for all three age groups since 1984.

Only about one in 10 high school students does a substantial amount of homework – more than two hours a night – according to a separate study co-authored by Brian Gill of the RAND Corporation, another nonprofit research group. The figure has held fairly stable for the last 50 years.

"It's important to acknowledge that this is not true for for everybody," Gill said. "All those stories about overloaded kids – we're not suggesting that kids and parents are lying. It's just that it's pretty clear that those stories are the exception rather than the norm."

Given homework's positive link to achievement as students get older, parents and educators must have an accurate picture of what most students face, Loveless said. Cases of excessive homework should be addressed by parents and teachers for individuals.

WOLTERS