

The Homework Monster

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The whole concept of assigning homework, getting it home and back to school, and then grading it has long been a monster problem for teachers, parents, and students. Many teachers have simply given up, thinking it was simply not worth the effort. But there is great value to be had from including parents in their children's educational process, and almost every student will benefit from practicing skills outside of the classroom.

Here are some thoughts about homework monster and how we can tame it and use it to our advantage.

- **Limit assignments to 10 minutes per grade level per night.** This means that students in kindergarten should not have homework at all. Remember that some of the minutes spent on "homework" should be practicing math facts, working on a research project or simply reading. The whole homework time should not be spent on worksheets. Clarify this with parents by sending home specific instructions on the nights that a worksheet is not assigned.
- **Send home only review materials and skills.** Do not send home worksheets or projects that deal with newly introduced concepts or skills. This will make you look like an ineffective teacher. Instead, make homework be practice or a review of previously mastered material, thus reinforcing skills and making homework a positive experience for all.
- **Simplify the grading process.** Because students have varied amounts of parent support, grade homework as full credit, half credit or no credit.
- **Rearrange the homework schedule.** Try giving out all homework assignments on Monday and make them due on Friday. Parents will love you for this because it allows them to work around their children's many after-school activities.
- **Make parents informed assistants.** Make sure parents have clear instructions about what is to be done on the page and a suggestion of how they can help.
- **Control parent input.** Allow students to do online or library research at home, but have the child complete writing assignments in class.
- **Assign read-aloud homework.** Reading out loud forces students to alter their voice inflections and pay attention to punctuation. This further adds to reading enjoyment and understanding. Listening to students read provides parents with opportunities to help clarify any confusion students may have about the correct pronunciation or meaning of words.