

“Homework. . . Why won’t you do it?”
By Eric Porter-AFT/WTU Teacher Leaders 2014-2015
What type of homework assignment will yield the best completion rate?

Rationale

Since the dawn of education, homework has been an intricate part of the world of academia. And since that dawn, homework has been the cause of many arguments these arguments range from small personal arguments to political arguments played out before the nation. For example, according to a study done by Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), some have argued that homework is the cause for the widening achievement gap. The study noted that students who were more economically advantaged spent more time on homework thus getting higher test scores than those who were more economically disadvantaged and spent less time on homework. Some will argue that students don’t need homework at all, such as Principal Jane HSU of PS 116 who banned homework and instead told students to play, read a book or spend time with family, instead of homework. On an even smaller scale, at this moment, there is some parent who is arguing that their child turned in a homework assignment, despite the fact the assignment is sitting in the student’s locker. At any rate, from Capitol Hill, to each school, to each classroom, homework is a highly debated and argued subject.

In theory, homework is used to reinforce the lessons learned in school, but it also helps parents to obtain academic access to their child’s world, and it teaches responsibility to students. The teachers at my school firmly believe in the importance of homework. However, our students do not. As a 7th grade team, we felt that the homework completion rate was entirely too low. Therefore, I conducted an experiment to determine which type of homework assignment would yield the highest completion rate.

Literature Review

There have been several research projects dealing with homework (HW), two of which I will focus. The first was “Homework Completion at the Secondary School Level: A Multilevel Analysis. The focus of this author’s, Jianzhong Xu, research focused on testing variables that would affect student’s homework completion. He found that, “. . . student level variables contributed to the explanation of variation in homework completion, including gender, self-reported grade, teacher feedback, learning-oriented reasons, homework interest and homework management.” (“Homework Completion. . .”, 179)

The other article, “Motivating Intervention Strategies to Increase Homework Completion focused more on the research I conducted. The purpose of the project was to “increase homework completion through the use of motivating strategies.” Their strategies included using the last fifteen minutes for HW, checking off agenda books and a ticket reward system. Despite the fact that there was no significant improvement in HW completion, the researchers feel the strategies were successful.

Data/Tools/Process

My research was conducted through my six, seventh-grade Math classes, which consisted of a total of 100 students. I used four types of homework assignments: Nightly HW, Flipped Classroom, Weekly Packet and No HW. Each type was implemented for three weeks, except for No HW which was implemented for one week. Over the course of each type of HW’s implementation, I recorded the completion data. I also gave the students four surveys about HW. The first survey was given to gauge student’s thoughts on HW. The others gauged their thoughts on each type of assignments and student’s estimation on how much of the HW they completed. I used the later to compare student’s perception to the data that was recorded.

Data Analysis

Nightly HW: **60% Completion Rate**

Survey Results:

- History is the subject most students complete - (68%)
- Science is a subject least completed- (40%)
- Students have access to internet or computer- (88%)
- Top reasons for not completing HW are:
 - "Forgot" - (38%)
 - "No Time" - (37%)
 - "Did not understand" - (31%)
- Most desired type of HW-Worksheet
- Students do see point of HW- (67%)
- Students feel HW is beneficial - (60%)

Flipped Classroom: **34% Completion Rate**

Survey Results:

- 84% of students like flipped classroom
- Main reasons for not completing Flipped Classroom HW: "Forgot"- (29%)
"Don't have time"-(24%)

Weekly Packet: **57% Completion**

Survey Results

- Liked the HW Packets- (44%); Disliked HW Packet- (56%)
- Main reason for not completing: "Forgot"-(38%); "Too much"-(28%)

No HW: **No Data Recorded**

Survey Results

- Liked not having HW-(69%)

Recommendations

Nightly HW yielded the highest completion rate of 60%. I feel that Nightly HW received the highest completion rate due to the student's conditioning of this type of HW over years. However, despite the fact that Nightly HW had the highest completion rate; a 60% completion rate is not enough.

I feel some of the factors that could contribute to the failing completion rate are the amount of classes and amount of HW for each class.

Recently, I have reduced the amount of problems assigned for HW nightly in hopes of increasing the completion rate.

Bibliography

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