

## NET SURVEY RESULTS – 2019-2020

<b>Topic: Should Homework be Optional</b>	<b>Date conducted: 2016-2017</b>
<b>Number of responses:</b>	<b>Submitted by:</b>
<b>Net: PTCnet</b>	<b>Survey Type: Email Thread</b>

### Has any school made homework optional? That is teachers provide homework but students can choose whether or not to do it?

- We basically did this by adopting a new homework policy along with the new assessment policy. Homework points are no longer allowed to be part of a grade where they just contribute "effort" points. Grades must only be based upon assessments of what the student knows or can do/apply. Homework fits into our new philosophy as a formative assessment to give feedback and support the learning process.
- We have considered this however, the feedback we received was, in most cases, it is the parents not pupils making the decision on homework. I still like the optional idea (although with the teacher having a final say if a pupils would benefit from some additional learning at home). We have moved away from the term 'homework' to 'home learning' to try and get parents and pupils (and some teachers) to re-examine its role, advantages/disadvantages, method, purpose and expected outcomes.
- We opted for a "home learning" program where students (with parents involvement and approval) "negotiated" what personal learning objectives (extended study time, musical instrument lessons and practice, computer coding, babysitting, skateboarding, etc.) they would pursue during after-school hours instead of traditional homework. Students were responsible for documenting time and reflecting on growth.
- We made the shift to there being no homework in our elementary school. We started by changing the name from homework to homelearning and changed the style of learning at home to be more inquiry based. The second step (year 2) we made it optional and in the third year we dropped it all together. Throughout this process we held coffee mornings and shared articles with parents.
- One of a long list of things schools do that we know don't work. We're gifted at that. I often wonder if there isn't another option on homework. The problem with homework is that it's too easy for some, too hard for others, is not actually contributing to any specific learning. I wonder if an alternative is rooted in different classroom practice, so that HW is a continuation of an inquiry-based conversation.

For example:

- I want you to come in tomorrow with one burning question about today's session, and we'll begin tomorrow with those.

- (Using CGC language here) After today's session, you know this language kids, come in tomorrow with one conceptual learning: *I now understand that...* and be ready to explain it to another student/your learning team.

In other words, the 'homework' is a natural continuation of the inquiry that goes on in the classroom, with the kid doing some thoughtful processing, hooking them back into the next day's work. Not a chore, but some substantive thinking that extends the learning culture beyond the school day.  
Not really answering your question but maybe another approach.

- We made it optional for teachers to assign but of course, students are required to do it. It has worked well with all!
- We began with a pilot of 'home learning' in 3rd grade last year and carried it over to 4th this year. The concept is basically that student still read in the evenings but their homework is project based at their pace & integrates subjects. Presentations are made to the class and the parents of that student. This has gone over VERY well.
- In my last school homework was optional. When the assignment was considered a formative assessment, the students received feedback but it was not included in the final grade. We only included summative assessments in the final grade.
- We held a series of working groups with parts in which we shared the research. As a result, homework in banned in primary completely. It is optional in Middle school. Instead, we are now piloting sending home weekly challenges that students can choose to work on with families - designed to bring families together to solve real problems, rather than create angst at home over homework
- We have switched to Home Learning in the Lower School. Students are asked to read for 30 minutes (minimum) and work on individual projects that reflect a passion. No homework packs, K-4.
- As a Montessori school, compulsory homework is not part of our expectations, at least up until the end of Grade 6. We do ask that parents show an interest in their children's school lives and support with reading and basic maths facts, although none of this is compulsory and, at times, children will follow a line of inquiry that they are interested in. Parents are supportive of all of this. The only cloud on this horizon is from our Chinese department who say that rote learning of characters must be supported at home.

I cannot say that this lack of homework has in any way adversely affected the children's development, in fact I believe it is a very positive motivator for the children. although being in a competitive Asian environment means it is highly likely that some of our students are placed in after-school programmes by their parents.

## If so, how has it gone with teachers, parents and students?

- There have been a lot of communication and discussion sessions with parents. Overall I think most get this and support it. Some worry that we aren't preparing them for the rigors of college life. Others just don't get that the way they were educated back in the day wasn't necessarily superior. We've grounded our conversations in research and evidence-based practice, which has helped make the case.
- We banned homework until grade 4 in August. Rather, parents should be working towards developing a love of reading in these earlier grades and have conversations about the learning occurring at school.  
Reaction:

95% of parents loved it  
95% of teachers loved it  
95% of students loved it

- Stakeholders got together to craft a new “homework” policy. Reframed “homework” to extended learning activities with the following highlights:
  - All students are recommended to complete extended learning activities at home on a regular basis.
  - Parents should also include time after school to read with their child and time to play educational games.
  - Extended learning activities will be assigned by grade level and are collaboratively developed by teaming teams.
  - Do not expect “busy work” or worksheets as homework.

Then we introduced the idea of a homework grid which is sent home weekly. It is developed by grade level teams which brought consistency. Extended learning activities, especially the highlighted boxes, are “compulsory” and encouraged to be completed.

Overall, Parents have really appreciated this approach. Parents who culturally or philosophically are against homework are not pressured nor is their students “grade” tied to completion of it. Parents who love homework and want more activities; they are there.

Teachers appreciate the consistency in the approach and it opened up rich conversations about beliefs in homework, effectively moderating grade level expectations.

Students like this approach as well and, coupled with seesaw, it gets parents involved in the learning.