

Have You Done Your Homework on Homework? Marzano Model Stresses Timing and Quality

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Ah, homework. With such huge demands placed on you to cover lots of ground in your classroom, homework is not a matter of *if*, but *how*. Dr. Robert J. Marzano and the Learning Sciences Marzano Center have done a great deal of research on homework, and homework is an integral part of the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model. The research answers several big questions—*Does homework work the same for all age groups? How much homework should I assign? How do I get parents involved? How do I create high-impact homework?*

Grade Level and Homework: Sizable differences in impact

In *The Art and Science of Teaching*, Dr. Marzano notes that, at least in grades K through 3, “The clear pattern is that homework has less effect at the lower grades level.” Even with the limited benefits of homework in lower grades, though, he still believes it has value. He agrees with by H. Cooper (1989), who recommends:

“that elementary students be given homework even though it should not be expected to improve test scores. Instead, homework for young children should help them develop good study habits, foster positive attitudes toward school, and communicate to students the idea that learning takes work at home as well as school.” (p. 90)

Marzano’s review of research finds that the effect of homework increases significantly as children get older. Note the following effect of homework by grade level:

Grade Level	Percentile Gain
4-6	+6
7-9	+12
10-12	+24

So, yes—homework matters.

Time Spent on Homework: Is there a ‘sweet spot’?

Research shows that 7-12 hours per week has the largest impact, but there are considerations to be made for different grade levels. In *The Art and Science of Teaching*, Marzano recommends 10 minutes per night, per grade level—a first grader would have 10 minutes and a fifth grader would have 50 minutes. It is important for teachers to coordinate on homework, as the recommended amounts are for all subjects combined.

Furthermore, poorly structured homework, regardless of time spent, may not be productive at all, and can even be counterproductive.

Quality Matters: Homework must be tied to learning goals

In a previous article on learning goals (Clear Learning Goals Set Students Up for Success), we explored the importance of clearly articulated and intelligently-crafted learning goals. Your homework assignments should be directly tied to the learning goals you have created. Every unit should have clear learning goals, and all homework should directly support these goals.

Parental Involvement: Best practices for increasing and improving help at home

If not handled properly, parental involvement with homework can actually have *negative* results. The key is to design *interactive* homework. For this, parents must be provided with clear guidelines on their role in homework support and interaction. They must understand that they are not expected to provide answers or be an expert in the subject—but that they are expected to ask guiding questions to help the child summarize what has been learned, and the children should be expected to show and explain their work to the parents.

Homework...works.

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