



Homework

Prism's Philosophy on Homework



Research

HW has a modest (but real) effect on achievement for young students, and a greater effect for older students. Most research limits impact studies to test scores. The greater benefit lies in developing an ability to engage in self-directed unsupervised learning.

Time

Homework times differ by age. Students can expect 15-30 minutes per night in K-5th grade; 30-60 minutes/night in 6th-8th grade; and 60 minutes to 120 minutes depending on course load in high school.

Homework

School is back in session and with that all the routines and habits that come with it. One such routine is homework. The global views on homework are wide-ranging. Prism's homework policy was influenced not only by current research but also by our mission and commitment to develop well-balanced children of knowledge, insight, integrity and wisdom.

1

THE RESEARCH

This brief will provide an overview of the existing research on homework.

2

THE GOALS

Additionally, we identify the long- and short- term goals for homework at Prism.

3

IMPLEMENTATION

Finally, Prism's basic homework policy is outlined with age-specific expectations.

What does the research really say?

It's not uncommon for Prism educators to hear concerns about homework. Some parents want more due to a belief that additional homework results in greater academic achievement. Others express frustration that we still require homework at all, claiming that research has demonstrated that homework has no benefits.

Research actually shows that homework does have a positive impact on student achievement—though that impact is greater for older students than younger students. But more homework doesn't necessarily translate to better student achievement. [This article](#) (Cooper, Robinson & Patal, 2006) from Duke university reviews all studies on homework from 1987-2003. These researchers (who nicely summarize their results [here](#)) found that there is a modest, positive effect of homework on academic achievement for younger children and a stronger correlation for students in 7th through 12th grade. While the Duke researchers and others—[such as respected cognitive](#)



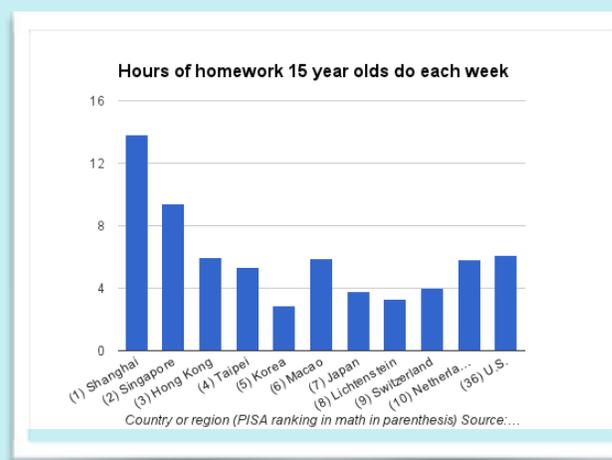
[psychologist Daniel Willingham](#)—take issue with the methodology employed for most studies on the efficacy of homework, generally speaking, most empirical evidence suggests homework—in reasonable amounts—benefits students. What constitutes a reasonable amount differs by age level.

As with all research, there are studies that show different results—even those that find no effect on student achievement for elementary aged students. After reviewing much of this research, we take issue with some of the study designs and definitions. Furthermore, even if there were no link to improved test scores for elementary students, we still think homework creates an

HOMEWORK AROUND THE WORLD

U.S. students are closer to average in terms of the hours of homework that they complete each night (keep in mind, these are self-reports) according an article in the [Hechinger report](#) that compares homework patterns around the world.

The US is on the lower end of average with 15 year-old students completing about 6 hours per week (US ranks 36th in student performance. Shanghai students are have both the highest performance and the highest homework completed (14 hours/week).



Prism’s homework policy is intended to maximize student achievement, ensure all students have an equal opportunity to fulfill their potential, and provide students an opportunity to develop the independent work habits that will enable them to excel in their career and future school environments.

opportunity for students to develop strong work habits and an ability to learn to engage in self-directed learning—even if it is solely rote practices initially. Test scores are not the sole outcome we measure. Therefore we will require some homework even for elementary aged students. However, we want to ensure that the type of homework mandated here is targeted to truly fulfilling these goals. We also want to ensure that homework does not result in an imbalanced lifestyle where students are staying up until midnight sacrificing sleep and important time with family.

Therefore, our homework policy has the following general principles:

- 1. With the exception of Kindergarten, students should be able to do homework independently.**
- 2. Homework should provide an opportunity for students to practice what they have already learned or engage students in activities that are best**

learned with repetition (such as math facts, etc).

- 3. Homework will gradually increase with age to ensure students develop strong work habits and capture the benefits of homework as the benefits increase.**

Guidelines and Exceptions

In the table below, we have identified some general guidelines that parents can expect to be followed for Prism’s homework policy. As you can see, much of what students do in early primary grades is centered on memorization and reading. As students age, their assignments become more complex and more independent. Additionally, homework becomes more extensive.

It is important to remember that the target amount of homework required is just that: a target. Some students will take longer and some will finish their homework much more quickly.

Age	Target Amount of Homework	Call if homework takes more than...	Type of Homework
K - 2nd Grade	15- 20 minutes	30 minutes	Reading, Site Words, Math Facts
3rd-6th Grade	30-45 minutes	60 minutes	Reading, Math Facts & Practice
6th-8th Grade	Up to 1 hour	Consistently longer than 90 minutes	Reading, Essays, Projects, Test Study, Math Facts if needed
9th-12th Grade	Up to 2 hours	Consistently longer than 2 hours	Projects, Essays, Reading, Test Study

However, if a child consistently takes much longer to do their homework than our target, there may be some other issues present that we need to address. For that reason, we've given you some guidelines about when homework may be venturing outside the realm of "too much". The third column of the table on page 3 tells us when you should call the teachers with concerns. But please note, you should only call if your child consistently takes longer than the times listed in this column.

There are reasons why homework might occasionally take longer than the time described here. First, students who aren't paying attention or focusing in class may often be assigned to complete the work the rest of the students completed in class at home. If your child comes home with more than 4-8 math problems from their workbook or language arts work from their workbook, it might be worthwhile to ask if they were paying attention in class or if they stayed on-task during class. This is one of the many logical consequences we use at Prism to help motivate students who might otherwise struggle to stay focused in class.

Another reason that homework might take longer for some students is that they are simply slower at completing the work. It is especially important for these students to engage in the repetitive process associated with homework. We have observed that the students for whom homework is most time-consuming are also the same students for whom homework is most beneficial. Last year, we observed the progress of students who took extra time to complete work in the classroom. There was a notable difference in the performance outcomes of students who engaged in homework diligently and those who did not. This is an anecdote and not a formal study. Nonetheless, these

observations certainly influenced our thinking on homework.

Finally, students certainly interact with homework differently with their parents than at school. We understand that this is a reality that can create additional stress at home. Since we do believe there are benefits to doing work without a parent or teacher standing over a student supervising them, we can provide extra support through our Homework Help time. We also want to help with those students who may need extra assistance with more complex concepts. We provide this support with "homework help" for all of our older students (Prism North age) from 3:00-3:30 PM each day for students who are not in the after school program or for those students who are enrolled in the after school program, but are positioned on a later bus route. Students enrolled in the after school at all ages will engage in homework help from 3:30-4:00 (the only exception to this will be the older students from North who have finished their homework at North in the earlier block). Additionally, students have an opportunity to stay in Study Hall every afternoon where they can request the help of an instructional assistant between 4:00 and 5:00 PM daily.

Opportunities for Homework Help

3:00-3:30 Prism North:
Non-after school students or late bus riders
to after school

3:30-4:00 Prism South:
Early bus riders from North and Prism South
students

4:00-5:00:
Students who register for after school study
hall