

Senior Dad

The Show About Parenting

Weekly from San Francisco

Hosted by Stan Goldberg



Senior Dad Homework Position February 2007

Homework has been the mainstay of American education for the last 75 years. Like hemlines, the perceived need rises and falls as the market demands. Homework can be a polarizing issue. Some parents crave more homework assignments for their children while others seek a way of removing their children from what they view as a treadmill going nowhere. Within families there may be sometime divisiveness and acrimony over homework and some parents would rather retire from their role as the homework warden in the eyes of their children.

There has been exhaustive research on the subject. There have been enough studies written about homework to fill a school library. I came to the subject without any current bias. I did remember my own feelings about homework when I was in school (1947-1965). I cast those aside and set out to view homework with a modern objective approach. First, I got the current published thought on homework.

Sara Bennett—*The Case Against Homework*

Alfie Kohn—*The Homework Myth*

Harris Cooper—*The Battle over Homework*

John Buell—*Closing the Book on Homework*

I then interviewed each of the authors for my Senior Dad podcast (Senior Dad 008-010). I learned that while there is minor disagreement about the value of homework in the middle and high schools, everyone agrees that there is no value to giving homework in the grades K-5. So if that is true, why do we still assign homework to K-5 students?

The answer to the, “Why do we still do it?” question is complex. If we view the education of our children as a Parent-School partnership there may not be tools to foster dialogue between these groups. We decided to develop a tool that could supply information to both parents and staff about the current climate about homework in their school. We designed a questionnaire that a school or PTA could use to educate themselves about homework conditions. The survey addresses many issues surrounding homework. Teachers assign homework and have a perception of the amount of time it will take the student to complete. Is this perception reality? How much stress does homework produce in the child or parents? Does homework impact on family time? Has there been is change over the course of the term in the child’s love of school and learning?

Would you use a no-penalty opt-out policy for homework? These are important questions in which the survey can provide insight.

Senior Dad is offering the use of this survey without charge to your school. We will tabulate the data from your school and return it to the school or PTA, along with the tabulation from all respondents from other schools.

Schools should not rush into change. The homework system has been in place for 75 years, and adjustments to it should be made respectfully with all parties evaluating the effects of the adjustment year to year. The first step is developing the information to make decisions. The homework survey tool allows for a barometer of homework attitudes at a school. By the parents and staff working together, understanding everyone's needs, we can improve the educational experience and results for all families.