

The Homework Myth – (Lecture Topic)

THE HOMEWORK MYTH

After spending most of the day in school, children are typically given additional assignments to be completed at home – a remarkable fact, when you stop to think about it. What's more, homework in most schools isn't limited to those times when it seems appropriate and important. Rather than saying, "Doing this particular project at home may be useful," our message seems to be, "We've decided ahead of time that students will have to do something every night. Later on we'll figure out what to make them do." We know it causes stress and conflict, frustration and exhaustion. But at least, we tell ourselves, it teaches them independence and good work habits, "reinforces" what they've been taught, and helps them to become more successful learners.

Or does it? In this presentation, Alfie Kohn carefully reviews the usual defenses of homework and finds that none is actually supported by research, logic, or experience. He then offers half a dozen reasons to explain why we feel obligated to administer this modern cod liver oil even though there is no evidence that it's necessary – and considerable evidence that it undermines children's interest in learning. This, in turn, leads to a closer look at our assumptions about teaching in general, and practical suggestions for rethinking what students are asked to do both during and after school. (For more details about this talk, please see the book of the same name.)

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