

Study: Contrary to popular belief, parents OK with kids' homework loads

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Today's youngsters are buried under homework, which gobbles up free time that could be spent with family or friends. Parents, puzzled whether to help their children dig out from a pile of books or allow them to carry on alone, are frustrated by the take-home workload. And they're angry at the stress the immense amounts of homework can put on their whole family.

Sound familiar?

That's the current conventional wisdom about homework, which is often perpetuated in the popular press through stories of stressed-out [schoolchildren](#) and perplexed [parents](#).

However, a new study from University of Nebraska-Lincoln researchers actually shows parents see homework in a much more positive light.

While students are spending considerable time completing homework, parents are generally supportive of homework practices, the study shows. They're also involved in homework -- usually in minimal but supportive ways, said Ken Kiewra, UNL professor of educational psychology and an expert on learning strategies, homework and study methods.

"Our findings should squelch the sentiments that homework is robbing children of free time and that parents are opposed to homework practices," Kiewra said. "Parents generally report that children spend ample time playing and socializing and report that homework workloads

are reasonable."

Published in the latest issue of *Scholarlypartnershipsedu*, the study examined four key issues: how long it takes students to complete their daily homework, how parents feel about their child's amount of homework, how much parents are involved in it, and how well schools communicate with parents about homework levels and expectations.

The results of the study, which involved nearly 400 parents of middle schoolers, gave details to a number of contemporary questions about homework, Kiewra said. Among them:

- Are students overburdened by too much homework and robbed of free time? No, the UNL study found. While most middle schoolers spend 60 to 90 minutes a day with homework -- slightly higher than what previous research in the area had shown -- parents in the study did not believe it interfered with their children's recreational or social activities.
- Does daily homework create family [stress](#) and infringe on family life as a whole? No, the UNL study found. Most parents said they thought their kids' amount of daily homework was appropriate and did not encroach upon family activities. In fact, most parents surveyed were either indifferent about or thankful for homework.
- Are parents unsure how to help their children with homework? No, the UNL study found: Most parents said they were involved in their child's homework, but in general their involvement was minimal but positive. They focused on motivating their children or checking their answers.

- Do schools and parents communicate about homework levels and expectations? Not really -- the UNL study confirmed prior research that there is scarcely any discussion about homework levels initiated by the school or parents.

Kiewra said the study unearths three main issues that merit further attention and repair.

"First, although findings cast a softer light on the homework battle that has raged between families and schools, it does not extinguish it," he said. "Twenty-five percent of parents still contend that excessive homework practices infringe on family life."

Second, although most parents help children with homework in positive ways, about one-quarter sometimes completes assignments for their children who are sometimes overburdened, he said.

Third, homework communication between schools and parents is a dead-end street.

"With better communication, [homework](#) loads are more likely to be manageable and parental assistance more likely positive."

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln ([news](#) : [web](#))

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