

Dissecting Homework

The Homework Debate

“Too much or too little; too easy too hard; a spur to student achievement or student alienation; a marker of enlightened or lazy teaching; a builder of character or a degrader of self-esteem; too demanding or too dismissive of parents; a stimulus of national economic vigor or behavioral conformity. The range of complaints about homework is enormous, and the complaints tend—as much today as in the past—toward extreme, angry, often contradictory views.”

—Gill & Schlossman, 2004, p. 174

Answer these four questions about the homework routines in your classroom. Share your responses with everyone at your table.

1. How often are students assigned and expected to complete homework?
 - ☐ Daily
 - ☐ Most days
 - ☐ Occasionally
 - ☐ Never
2. What is the primary role of homework (assuming it is assigned) in your classroom?
 - ☐ Always for practice, never graded
 - ☐ Mostly for practice, sometimes graded
 - ☐ Mostly graded, sometimes for practice
 - ☐ Always graded, never for practice
3. Has your perspective on the role of homework remained constant throughout your career, or has it changed over time?
4. How much of your homework routines are shaped by the age of your students? Do you think your routines would change if you were teaching younger or older students? If so, how?

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Questions

1. Which alternative homework strategy is most reflective of your current homework routines?
2. Which alternative homework strategy would you be most willing and excited to add to your homework routines?
3. Have you used or do you use strategies or routines not listed that move homework practice to a more formative assessment experience? If so, explain.
4. Would your handling of homework differ if you taught students two grades below those students you currently teach? What about two grades higher?

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