

Why More and More Parents Are Opting Their Kids Out of Homework

Parents are realizing just how little homework has to offer—and they're pushing back.

By [Jordan Rosenfeld](#) / [AlterNet](#)

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We tend to think of homework as a necessary part of learning, a practice that teaches children discipline and keeps them from idleness. Yet a growing body of research reveals an astonishing truth: ***homework has little to no benefit in enhancing learning or performance in elementary and middle school, and only minor benefits, usually in math, in high school.*** This conclusion comes courtesy of a review of all major homework studies recently highlighted the *Washington Post*, including an update to a 2001 review conducted by the leading U.S. researcher on homework, Harris Cooper of Duke University.

While this data may seem counter-intuitive to some, many families have already discovered the negative impacts of too much homework, as early as kindergarten, ranging from a loss of quality family time or play time, to middle schoolers with stress induced headaches, anxiety and even ulcers. As a result, more parents are deciding enough is enough, and choosing instead to opt their kids out of homework.

Liz Onstad of Portland, Oregon is mother to a 10-year-old daughter who had no problems with homework until fourth grade. Even though Onstad created a dedicated homework space where she'd be available to help her daughter get her homework done, the tediousness of the assignments led to resistance and fights.

“It turns out much of this year’s homework really is stupid,” Onstad said. “As the year has progressed, I’ve seen only increased frustration in my child and I haven’t seen any of the value of the schoolwork. The mental health of my child and the sanity of my household is more important to me than doing the work for homework’s sake.” She partly blames her daughter’s ready-for-retirement teacher, who she says is “pretty much checked out.”

Onstad is herself a formerly high-performing student who attended a respected four-year college, which was once a priority she held for her daughter. Now that value has changed. "A couple years ago I would have said a good college and an education would be a high priority. But now as I see my girl become who she is, the idea of ‘good college, good job’ is less important. My definition of success has more to do with her learning to be a responsible adult.”

This sentiment is echoed by other parents across a variety of experiences. Rene Denfeld, a death-row investigator in Portland, has been a foster and adoptive mother for 20 years. She routinely opted her three adopted children out of homework beginning in elementary school.