



The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing

By *Alfie Kohn*

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So why do we continue to administer this modern cod liver oil-or even demand a larger dose? Kohn's incisive analysis reveals how a set of misconceptions about learning and a misguided focus on competitiveness has left our kids with less free time, and our families with more conflict. Pointing to stories of parents who have fought back-and schools that have proved educational excellence is possible without homework-Kohn demonstrates how we can rethink what happens during and after school in order to rescue our families and our children's love of learning.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Education watchdog and author Kohn (*No Contest: The Case Against Competition*) questions why teachers and parents continue to insist on overloading kids with homework when there are no definitive studies proving its overall learning benefits. Indeed, argues Kohn persuasively, homework can be detrimental to children's development by robbing families of quality evening time together and not allowing a kid time simply to be a kid. Americans in general advocate a tough-going approach to education and push teachers to give more drudgery nightly as a way of "building character." Yet Kohn shows that doing forced busywork only turns kids off to school and kills intellectual and creative curiosity. The American insistence on producing good worker bees "by sheer force or cleverness," notes Kohn, "reflects a stunning ignorance about how human beings function in the real world." Kohn pursues six reasons why homework is still so widely accepted despite the evidence against it, including the emphasis on competitiveness and "tougher standards" and a basic distrust of children and how they would fill their time otherwise if not doing busywork. There aren't enough case studies in Kohn's work, but Kohn sounds an important note: parents need to ask more challenging questions of teachers and institutions. (*Sept.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Kohn has mapped for himself an uphill struggle against widely held beliefs that American children need homework to stay on track for academic success and to compete with better-prepared children in other nations. Kohn outlines the costs of homework: overburdened parents, stressed children, family conflicts, little free time, declining interest in learning. He highlights the debate between parents and teachers as they argue about the relative benefits or detriments of homework, and explores research--from as far back as the 1800s--indicating that homework does not improve learning. Exploring the variety of assignments, from fill-in-the-blank sheets to more creative efforts, Kohn maintains that homework does not improve learning for children, whether in grade school or high school, and laments the trend of giving homework to younger and younger students. He also takes to task the alleged nonacademic benefits of homework, including teaching children time-management and study skills. Whatever their opinions about homework, parents and teachers will find this book an interesting part of the debate. *Vanessa Bush*
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Review

"Alfie Kohn holds a crucial position in the American dialog about parenting." -- Michael Gurian

"Perhaps the country's most outspoken critic of education's fixation on grades [and] test scores."

"[The Schools Our Children Deserve is]...a remarkable book that should become a classic in the field." -- Jonathan Kozol

"The most energetic and charismatic figure standing in the way of [making] standardized curriculums and tests a fact of life in every U.S. school."

"A good book to have on hand when defending the idea of homework-free elementary schooling."--"San Antonio Express-News"

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Barbara Spangler:

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