



Homework at St John the Baptist School, Woy Woy

2018

Over the last couple of decades we have experienced many changes to family life with a greater number of both parents working and/or travelling distances to access work, increasing numbers of single and blended families, an explosion in after school activities and accessibility to information: internet, mobile phones and other devices, computer games, pay TV etc.

On top of these practical issues which have made homework a time of angst for families as they struggle to “get it done”, we have seen expert educational leaders across the world undertake research into the effects of homework on learning. This is explained below:

Homework has always been a fraught and controversial topic for students, educators, parents, and policy makers. Horsley and Walker tackle the topic head-on, covering all angles with a comprehensive, research-based focus. Their overall findings are that “homework has no achievement benefits for students up to grade 3, negligible benefits for students in grades 4-6, weak benefits for students in grades 7 to 9, and reasonable benefits for students in grades 10 to 12” (p. 10, 2013).

John Hattie in his wide body of evidence-based research concurs, explaining “The effect size of 0.40 sets a level where the effects of innovation enhance achievement in such a way that we can notice real-world differences, and this should be a benchmark of such real-world change.” 0.40 can be used as a “guideline to begin discussions about what we can aim for if we want to see students change.” In Hattie’s research he addresses the effect size of homework, “the typical effect size of homework is 0.29, but the effects are greater for high school students and closer to zero for elementary school students” (p. 17, Hattie, 2009).

In line with this research and recognising the changing face of family life we are adapting the makeup of homework to:

1. Emphasise family life and active pursuits
2. Recognise the wide range of after-school activities offered by the wider community
3. Encourage positive family interactions
4. Allow time for children to pursue their own learning
5. Encourage a focus on life skills as well as academic skills.

It is generally agreed that **READING** is the foundational skill required for all other areas of learning. Once this skill has been mastered every other area of learning becomes easier. With this in mind, SJB places a significant focus on acquiring the reading skills of decoding, fluency and comprehension.

“If a child does not engage with reading, and fails to spend hundreds of hours actively reading for themselves, then fluency in reading for comprehension cannot develop” (p. 57, Hattie & Yates, 2014). To this end we are making reading the sole regularly set homework to be completed. It is expected that **EVERY STUDENT WILL READ EVERY NIGHT** for a minimum of **TWENTY MINUTES**. Students in Years K – 4 are expected to read aloud to a parent and/or carer followed by a discussion on the contents of what has been read, e.g. character description, plot and context to develop comprehension skills through a thorough understanding of what has been read, e.g.

1. Why do you think (the character) did that?
2. What would you have done in their place? Why?
3. How did you feel when this happened?
4. Why do you think it worked out that way?
5. What could be a different ending?

A mix of fiction and non-fiction is suggested. Students in Years 5 – 6 are permitted to read to themselves for the required time each night (20 min). **At the completion of reading each night the reading log is to be filled out.** Reading

can be from a variety of sources, e.g. guided readers, library books, newspapers, magazines etc. If reading fiction it is recommended to read from start to finish (whole book) rather than picking out bits and pieces of different texts each night.

In addition to reading with your child EACH NIGHT, you may like to spend time undertaking some of the following:

-Get your child to teach you something they have learnt at school, e.g. maths game, science experiment, history/geography information, English details etc.

-Play a board game

-Physical activity/sport

-Chores around the house/yard

-Grocery shopping – make a list, calculate costs

-Cultural experience – visit a museum

-Music practice

-Relaxation time

The following sites/apps are useful for literacy and numeracy understanding and skill development:

-Study Ladder: https://www.studyladder.com.au/?lc_set= (covers a variety of KLAs)

-Splash! Cool maths Games: <http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/games/-/mathematics> (Links to other KLAs)

-Range of maths apps: <https://snapshot-21stcentury-learning.weebly.com/maths-apps.html>

-Literacy apps:

https://www.mansfieldisd.org/uploaded/schools/imogene_gideon/assets/Top_Literacy_iPad_Apps.pdf

-Typing skills: <https://www.typingclub.com/>

-Literacy Apps: Clicker & Oz Phonics 1, 2, 3, 4

-Learning Potential, Support at Home:

http://www.learningpotential.edu.au/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ESA%20News_April%202017&utm_content=ESA%20News_April%202017%20CID_31a25a9a50b557839c12aeacd05e8faf&utm_source=email&utm_term=Learning%20Potential%20Resources

N.B. From time to time your child may be given a ‘home-school’ link activity to do at home, e.g. research an aspect of family history, collect household products for construction activities at school, bring in a family photo etc. These activities will provide a meaningful connection between the school and home and not be given merely for the sake of ‘work’.

References:

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning*. New York: Routledge.

Hattie, J. & Yates, G. (2014). *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*. New York: Routledge.

Horsley, M., & Walker, R. (2013). *Reforming homework: Practices, learning and policy*. South Yarra: Palgrave Macmillan.