

# Homework Can Be a Game Changer!



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After 40 years of teaching, parenting, and now grandparenting, I have helped hundreds of kids and supported countless parents with homework challenges. Some students love to get their homework done and demand instant help from parents regardless of the family's schedule. Others race through their assignments and will write down any answer just to get rid of the assignment so they can pursue fun activities. And then there are the anxious students who are overwhelmed with many assignments and need lots of encouragement and help. The problem is most parents are not equipped to help their children adequately at home because of time, knowledge, or having to deal with difficult panic behaviors with their children. So, what can a parent do to make this task more enjoyable for all?

## Structure Homework Time

Parents need to create a structured time when homework can be completed depending on each child's needs. For

example, most kids need a snack before tackling homework. Many kids need some down time to relax and decompress. Some kids attend aftercare or participate in demanding afterschool activities. They are exhausted by the time they arrive home at night. Many students prefer doing their homework before dinner, others prefer after dinner homework time, and some do best in the early morning. In response to these challenges, many teachers send home weekly or monthly homework packets to allow flexibility for families to focus on homework activities on specific days of the week.

## Support Individualized Learning Needs

Parents can work with their child's teacher to identify a win-win strategy for highly anxious students. The teacher can then send home an individualized homework packet that reinforces the student's learning level of success and limits overwhelming failure. Some teachers create a more challenging packet for students who wish to grow faster in their learning or a classroom packet that meets the needs of most students.

## Encourage Student Success

When a very frustrated student feels that they are failing at homework, then that attitude of failure is reinforced in the classroom. Parents must be honest with the teacher in what they can or cannot do to support their challenged child's learning. If they lack the patience or knowledge in how to help their child learn, they should ask the teacher for resource help at the school.

Most schools have pull out remedial learning centers for students who are challenged in math or reading. These students do not qualify for special education services but need added support to build their learning stamina.

## Make Learning Fun

Some of our grandkids' homework assignments include games. These are fun when we model how to solve a math problem or word puzzle. Then we work together to succeed in each assignment. It is time consuming. At the end of the activity, our goal is for each grandkid to express success and gratitude for what they have learned. The payoff is when they have the skill to teach another friend at school or online about their newly acquired learning skill in math or reading.

## Create Homework Learning Sessions

When my kids were in elementary school, I worked with other parents to create homework sessions at each home. One friend's mom was great with math. She would create a weekly afterschool playdate at her home to reinforce basic math concepts. My strength was reading, writing, and creating reports. I continue to teach these skills in classrooms and support teachers with fun activities for learning. In January we are writing reports on snow or snow crystals and creating snow crystal drawings or snowflake cutouts. Another friend's strength is helping the students with advanced math concepts or science projects.

# Make Learning Fun

When there is no homework, we reinforce learning by creating books, cards, art projects, playing games, and creating match activities using a deck of playing cards. Each night we read to our grandkids as we discuss new ideas and build vocabulary. We research everything whenever a grandkid or student wants to learn more about an activity. My cell phone is my dictionary and also an encyclopedia. Through an artificial intelligence (AI) feature on my cell phone, I can read a general answer to a question and then research the reference articles listed under the summary for a more detailed explanation.

May you treasure this time in your children's lives, when you can help them develop connected passions and enthusiasm to learn. Our passionate curiosity for learning is contagious. Our children learn best when we model healthy strategies for problem solving and exploring new topics.

