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Homework has few benefits, says study

29th March, 2012

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

The notion of younger children doing homework is under attack. New research suggests that homework for younger children does not really provide any benefit and teachers only give it because parents want it. Professor Richard Walker of Sydney University said that elementary (primary) school children do hours of homework every week but it has minimal, if any, effect on their test grades or level. He said the situation was little better for junior high school kids. He suggested: "I don't think anyone except senior high school students should be doing a couple of hours of homework." Dr Walker said: "A little bit of homework is probably OK at all ages, if part of the reason is to help kids become self-directed learners."

The study from Sydney University comes days after calls by parents in France to boycott homework and read a book instead. Jean-Jacques Hazan of the French Parents Association said: "If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I don't see how they're going to succeed at home." He added that schools were pushing the responsibility of teaching onto parents, which causes family friction. "We're asking parents to do the work that should be done in lessons," he said. A teaching spokeswoman agreed, saying: "Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge to help their offspring." French primary schools still give homework despite a five-decade-long ban on it.

WARM-UPS

1. HOMEWORK: Walk around the class and talk to other students about homework. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

notion / younger children / benefits / homework / test grades / self-directed learner / boycott / succeeded / responsibility / family friction / knowledge / offspring / decade

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. LEARNING: How best can kids learn? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

Learn from...	Pros	Cons
homework		
Internet		
parents		
other kids		
school lessons		
playing		

4. BENEFIT: Students A **strongly** believe homework for children under the age of 12 is not beneficial; Students B **strongly** believe it is. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. SUBJECTS: Which did/do you like best at school? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- English
- maths
- literature
- history
- geography
- physical education
- science
- other _____

6. BOYCOTT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'boycott'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. New research suggests that no one benefits from doing homework. | T / F |
| b. A professor said homework raises test scores at elementary schools. | T / F |
| c. The professor said only Sr. high school students should do homework. | T / F |
| d. He said homework that leads to independent learning is good for all. | T / F |
| e. Parents in France want to boycott homework. | T / F |
| f. A parent said kids can learn things at home they didn't at school. | T / F |
| g. The parent said homework leads to problems in the family. | T / F |
| h. Homework was banned for primary school kids in France last year. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. notion | a. triumph |
| 2. suggests | b. impact |
| 3. minimal | c. besides |
| 4. effect | d. idea |
| 5. except | e. avoid |
| 6. calls | f. negligible |
| 7. boycott | g. children |
| 8. succeed | h. indicates |
| 9. offspring | i. in spite of |
| 10. despite | j. requests |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. The notion of younger | a. effect |
| 2. under | b. how they're going to |
| 3. it has minimal, if any, | c. directed learners |
| 4. A little | d. read a book instead |
| 5. help kids become self- | e. attack |
| 6. boycott homework and | f. their offspring |
| 7. I don't see | g. decade-long ban |
| 8. do the work that should | h. children doing homework |
| 9. the necessary knowledge to help | i. be done in lessons |
| 10. despite a five- | j. bit |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The (1) _____ of younger children doing homework is under attack. New research suggests that homework for younger children does not (2) _____ provide any (3) _____ and teachers only give it because parents want it. Professor Richard Walker of Sydney University said that elementary (primary) school children do hours of homework every week but it has (4) _____, if any, effect on their test grades or level. He said the situation was (5) _____ better for junior high school kids. He suggested: "I don't think anyone (6) _____ senior high school students should be doing a couple of hours of homework." Dr Walker said: "A little (7) _____ of homework is probably OK at all ages, if part of the reason is to help kids become (8) _____ -directed learners."

minimal
except
really
self
notion
little
benefit
bit

The study from Sydney University comes days after (9) _____ by parents in France to (10) _____ homework and read a book instead. Jean-Jacques Hazan of the French Parents Association said: "If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I don't see how they're going to (11) _____ at home." He added that schools were (12) _____ the responsibility of teaching onto parents, which causes family (13) _____. "We're asking parents to do the work that should be done in lessons," he said. A teaching spokeswoman (14) _____, saying: "Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge to help their (15) _____." French primary schools still give homework despite a five-decade-long (16) _____ on it.

friction
ban
boycott
pushing
calls
offspring
agreed
succeed

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

The _____ children doing homework is under attack. New _____ homework for younger children does not really provide any benefit and teachers only _____ parents want it. Professor Richard Walker of Sydney University said that elementary (primary) school children do hours of homework every week but it has _____ on their test grades or level. He said the situation was little better for junior high school kids. He suggested: "I don't think _____ high school students should be doing a couple of hours of homework." Dr Walker said: "A little bit of homework is probably OK at all ages, if part of the reason is to help kids become _____."

The study from Sydney University comes _____ parents in France _____ and read a book instead. Jean-Jacques Hazan of the French Parents Association said: "If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I _____ going to succeed at home." He added that schools were pushing the responsibility of teaching onto parents, which _____. "We're asking parents to do the work that should be done in lessons," he said. A teaching spokeswoman agreed, saying: "Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge _____." French primary schools still give homework despite _____ on it.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'under' and 'attack'.

under	attack

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• notion• provide• minimal• little• couple• reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• calls• exercise• pushing• asking• agreed• five
---	---

HOMEWORK SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

Write five GOOD questions about homework in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'homework'?
- c) How useful do you think homework is?
- d) What did you think of doing homework when you were younger?
- e) What kind of English homework do you do now and how effective is it?
- f) Do you agree with the research that says homework for elementary school students has little benefit?
- g) Why do you think homework would have so little effect on grades and level?
- h) Do you think homework can help kids become self-directed?
- i) Was there any homework you like doing?
- j) Could children learn more without doing home?

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HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What three adjectives would you use to describe homework?
- c) Do you think French parents are right to boycott homework?
- d) Do you think children would be better off reading a book than doing homework?
- e) Do you think it's true that if children did not succeed in doing an exercise at school, that they're unlikely to do so at home?
- f) What do you think children would feel about a homework ban?
- g) How better could children spend their time if they didn't have homework?
- h) Do you think parents doing homework with their children causes friction in the family?
- i) Would you choose to have or not have homework? (Why?)
- j) What questions would you like to ask professor Richard Walker?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1203/120329-homework.html>

The (1) ____ of younger children doing homework is (2) ____ attack. New research suggests that homework for younger children does not really provide any benefit and teachers only give it because parents want it. Professor Richard Walker of Sydney University said that elementary (primary) school children do hours of homework every week but it has (3) ____, if any, (4) ____ on their test grades or level. He said the situation was little better for junior high school kids. He suggested: "I don't think anyone (5) ____ senior high school students should be doing a couple of hours of homework." Dr Walker said: "A little bit of homework is probably OK at all ages, if part of the reason is to help kids become (6) ____-directed learners."

The study from Sydney University comes days after (7) ____ by parents in France to (8) ____ homework and read a book instead. Jean-Jacques Hazan of the French Parents Association said: "If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I don't (9) ____ how they're going to succeed at home." He added that schools were pushing the responsibility of teaching onto parents, which causes family (10) _____. "We're asking parents to do the work that should be done in lessons," he said. A teaching spokeswoman agreed, saying: "Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge to help their (11) _____." French primary schools still give homework despite a five-decade-(12) _____ ban on it.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) potion | (b) lotion | (c) motion | (d) notion |
| 2. | (a) through | (b) under | (c) around | (d) over |
| 3. | (a) minimal | (b) mammal | (c) minimize | (d) miniature |
| 4. | (a) affect | (b) perfect | (c) effect | (d) compact |
| 5. | (a) accept | (b) concept | (c) except | (d) inception |
| 6. | (a) one | (b) self | (c) alone | (d) my |
| 7. | (a) calls | (b) hears | (c) orates | (d) listens |
| 8. | (a) franchise | (b) tender | (c) hasten | (d) boycott |
| 9. | (a) look | (b) see | (c) watch | (d) vision |
| 10. | (a) fracture | (b) fission | (c) faction | (d) friction |
| 11. | (a) springy | (b) springs | (c) offspring | (d) sprung up |
| 12. | (a) long | (b) width | (c) lengthy | (d) longest |

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HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about homework. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. HOMEWORK: Make a poster about homework. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. BOYCOTT: Write a magazine article about French parents boycotting homework for their children. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against the boycott.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to an education expert. Ask him/her three questions about homework. Give him/her three of your opinions on it. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. T e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. notion | a. idea |
| 2. suggests | b. indicates |
| 3. minimal | c. negligible |
| 4. effect | d. impact |
| 5. except | e. besides |
| 6. calls | f. requests |
| 7. boycott | g. avoid |
| 8. succeed | h. triumph |
| 9. offspring | i. children |
| 10. despite | j. in spite of |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. The notion of younger | a. children doing homework |
| 2. under | b. attack |
| 3. it has minimal, if any, | c. effect |
| 4. A little | d. bit |
| 5. help kids become self- | e. directed learners |
| 6. boycott homework and | f. read a book instead |
| 7. I don't see | g. how they're going to |
| 8. do the work that should | h. be done in lessons |
| 9. the necessary knowledge to help | i. their offspring |
| 10. despite a five- | j. decade-long ban |

GAP FILL:

Homework has few benefits, says study

The (1) **notion** of younger children doing homework is under attack. New research suggests that homework for younger children does not (2) **really** provide any (3) **benefit** and teachers only give it because parents want it. Professor Richard Walker of Sydney University said that elementary (primary) school children do hours of homework every week but it has (4) **minimal**, if any, effect on their test grades or level. He said the situation was (5) **little** better for junior high school kids. He suggested: "I don't think anyone (6) **except** senior high school students should be doing a couple of hours of homework." Dr Walker said: "A little (7) **bit** of homework is probably OK at all ages, if part of the reason is to help kids become (8) **self**-directed learners."

The study from Sydney University comes days after (9) **calls** by parents in France to (10) **boycott** homework and read a book instead. Jean-Jacques Hazan of the French Parents Association said: "If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I don't see how they're going to (11) **succeed** at home." He added that schools were (12) **pushing** the responsibility of teaching onto parents, which causes family (13) **friction**. "We're asking parents to do the work that should be done in lessons," he said. A teaching spokeswoman (14) **agreed**, saying: "Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge to help their (15) **offspring**." French primary schools still give homework despite a five-decade-long (16) **ban** on it.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - b 3 - a 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a