

Debate on homework gets the community talking

Last week this newspaper reported on Frog Hollow Primary School's recently introduced "no-homework" policy. As a result we have received a large number of responses – both letters and emails – on the issue of homework. Today's "Letters to the Editor" section has been devoted to this topic.

It seems to me there are valid arguments both for and against homework. Nevertheless, having reviewed these arguments, it's quite clear that the setting of a reasonable amount of homework, carefully supervised by the school, must win the day. Regular homework, properly supervised, trains students in good study habits. It gives them opportunities to revise what they have learned in school. They can also practise presentation skills in preparing assignments, both with and without the use of computers.

Many parents have said that forcing their children to do their homework leads to family tension and conflict, at a time of the day when everyone is tired and needs to relax. Could this be seen as a case of "copping out" by parents who are

unwilling, or unable, to exercise discipline over their children and set a good example? Attitudes such as this contribute to the general lack of control exercised over, and by, young people today.

To illustrate my point, recent local incidents reported in this paper have included playground equipment being vandalised, public buildings being defaced with graffiti, and an elderly person being knocked over by skateboarders in the shopping centre. It seems likely that the young people responsible for these incidents were using the leisure time they had gained by having no homework.

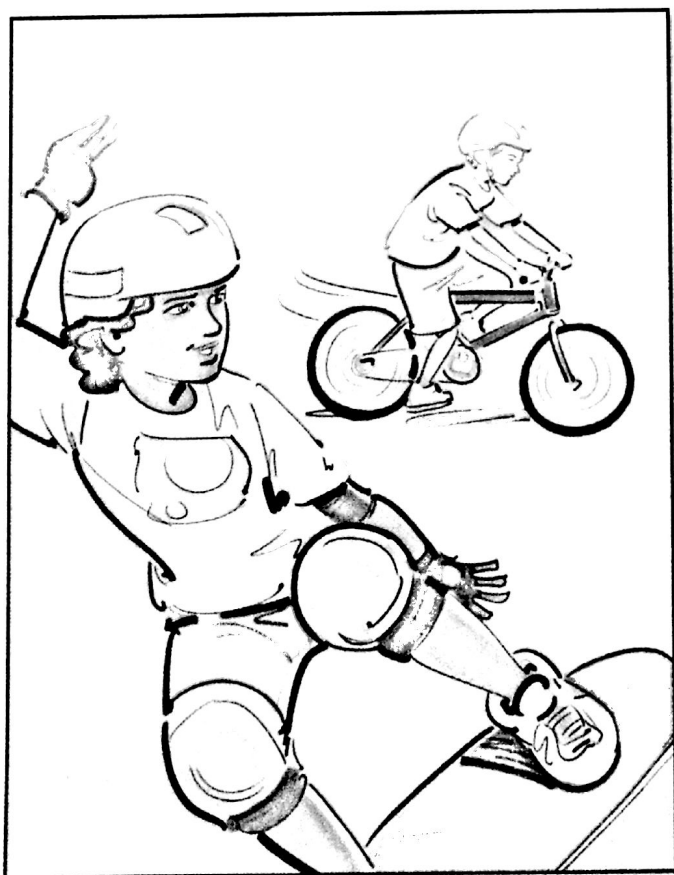
Parents and schools need to rethink "no-homework" policies carefully.



Dear Editor,

I am 18 and a tertiary student. I went to a progressive primary school. Homework was rare – at most I had 30 minutes a week. This was because, at school, we had a weekly deadline of work. The bulk of this was done in school time, encouraging good time management. Homework was time to catch up on what I hadn't finished in school hours. At high school I found the work easy to manage, though students who'd come from other schools struggled. In primary school I'd learned to manage my time and keep up to date. Others had learned that homework dominated their free time. Who learned more?

Cindy Lee, student



Dear Editor,

My daughter's school has homework, even in kindergarten! This is getting beyond a joke, and pushing kids to the limit. In Finland, children don't even start school until they're seven and, in spite of this, Finland achieved the highest numeracy and literacy results in the world in 2004. What does this tell us? So much homework is ridiculous!

Des Pappas, parent

I like school, but it's a drag to get at least two hours of homework every night. We do heaps of work at school, but despite this, every teacher loads us up with more to do at home. We might as well stay at school all night!

Ahmed, Year 6 student, by email

It's not fair to have more work after school. When we get home from school we need a change of pace. We want to play, or go to ballet or sport, do stuff with our friends and families, or just read a book, watch TV or veg out. But we have homework. We feel trapped and we miss out on our play time. It's not right! It doesn't make us feel good about school.

Kate and Elena, Year 5 students,
by email