

Anti-Homework Trend: Freeing Kids from a Culture of Dependency?

Late last summer, [Texas teacher Brandy Young](#) made internet waves when she sent a note about homework to the parents of her students.

Instead of the normal spend-30-minutes-a-day-on-homework command that parents normally hear, Mrs. Young's note informed them that she would not be giving homework at all. Instead, she asked families to spend more time reading, eating dinner, and playing outside, all factors which research has found to contribute to greater student success.

But Mrs. Young was not the only educator to get on the no homework bandwagon. An entire elementary school in Vermont did the same. And according to [The Washington Post](#), that decision seems to be turning out just fine for the students, parents, and teachers of Orchard School:

"Six months into the experiment, [school Principal Mark] Trifilio says it has been a big success: Students have not fallen back academically and may be doing better, and now they have 'time to be creative thinkers at home and follow their passions.'

...

Trifilio said he conducted a family survey asking about the policy, and most parents at the nearly 400-student school responded. The vast majority supported it, saying their kids now have time to pursue things other than math work sheets, and many report that students are reading more on their own than they used to. ...

The [Burlington Free Press](#) recently quoted parent James Conway as saying this about his son Sean, who is in kindergarten: 'My son declared on Monday that he can read now and that he doesn't need any help. So, something is working.'"

One has to wonder: if these no-homework policies are having such positive effects on the mental and emotional well-being of children, then why haven't we tried them before?

The answer, according to one former teacher, may have to do with the goal of the education system. According to [John Taylor Gatto](#), the current, one-size-fits-all school system has long been trying to turn creative, inventive, and bright students into obedient, subdued, and dependent individuals. This is done largely through orchestrating every minute of their time at school, and then extending that orchestration into children's free time at home:

*"Today the tabulation of hours in a young life reads like this: My children watch television 55 hours a week according to recent reports, and they sleep 56. That leaves them 57 hours in which to grow up strong and competent and whole. But my children attend school 30 hours more, spend 8 hours preparing for school, and in goings and comings, **and an additional 7 hours a week in something called 'home'-work – although this is really more schoolwork except in 'Newspeak'**. After the 45 school hours are removed a total of 12 hours remain each week from which to fashion a private person – one that can like, trust, and live with itself. Twelve hours. But my kids must eat, too, and that takes some time. Not much, because they've lost the tradition of family dining – how they learn to eat in school is best called 'feeding' – but if we allot just 3 hours a week to evening feedings, we arrive at a net total of private time for each child of 9 hours.*

...

This demented schedule is an efficient way to create

dependent human beings, needy people unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lines of meaning to give substance and pleasure to their existence. It is a national disease, this dependency and aimlessness, and schooling and television and busy work – the total Chautauqua package – has a lot to do with it.”

Is it possible that the trend away from homework may be one small step away from the culture of dependency we've instilled in recent generations?

Image Credit: Paul Fisher bit.ly/1jxQJMa