

IN INVESTIGATION OF THE HOMEWORK PRACTICES
IN THE CONRAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CONRAD, MONTANA

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concern of teachers, school officials, pupils, and parents led to a study of the homework situation in the Conrad Elementary School. In meeting the current public demand for high scholastic standards in the schools there is a danger of overburdening the students with several hours of homework each evening. This is a crucial problem, particularly in the upper grades, where departmentalization of subject areas is used. In this type of organization several different teachers make assignments to the same group of students, making co-ordination of home study difficult.

In self-contained classrooms the teacher has a better opportunity to control the time spent in home study. However, even in this situation students may be spending more time on preparing lessons outside of school than is good for them from a health standpoint, and in many cases it could be curtailing their leisure time activities.

The learning experiences that children encounter outside of school play an integral part in their total education. It is important to ascertain whether homework is seriously infringing on participation in church activities, music lessons, scouting, or causing a curtailment in family activities.

In assessing the homework program of a school system it is imperative to learn the type and amount of homework being assigned and the effect this outside study is having on the lives of the students.

PROBLEM

The basic purpose of this study was to investigate homework in the Conrad Elementary School. Specifically, the writer attempted to learn what the attitudes of parents, students, and teachers were regarding homework in the community. The study was also designed to find the amount of time students are now spending on homework assignments, and to solicit suggestions for improving the homework program.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures were used in this investigation of homework:

1. A review of current studies and related literature was made.
2. Students of the Conrad Elementary School in grades four through eight were given a questionnaire to fill out regarding the average amount of time they spent on homework each week. They were also asked for other pertinent information regarding their home study.
3. Parents of students in grades four through eight were given a survey sheet to complete in which they were

asked for information on their child's homework activities.

4. Teachers in grades four through eight were asked to complete a survey sheet on which they recorded information regarding their homework assignments. Comments and suggestions were also requested.

5. Students in grades six, seven, and eight were asked to keep a log of the time spent on homework in each subject area during a given period of 15 school days.

6. The data obtained from these sources was tabulated for study and comparison.

LIMITATIONS

This survey on homework in the Conrad Elementary School was subject to the following limitations:

1. The amount of time spent on homework had to be estimated by the parents and the students and may lack complete validity.

2. The time log kept by individual students in grades six, seven, and eight was for a 15 day period and the homework assignments of all subjects may not have been entirely representative of the assignments given during the rest of the year.

3. All survey sheets sent to parents, students, and teachers were returned with no identification other than grade level of the student.

4. Students in grades six, seven, and eight who kept the time log were asked to be as accurate as possible in keeping account of their time spent doing homework and were assured that the information obtained from them would be in no way used to judge their work or affect their grades in any manner.

CHAPTER II

RELATED STUDIES

Most educators will agree that homework is one of the major administrative problems, as well as one of the most controversial areas with which they have to deal. Attesting to this statement is the fact that homework is listed by the Educational Policies Commission (8) as one of the ten contemporary issues in elementary education.

Recent literature reviewed on the subject of homework has pointed out that the impetus given to certain subject areas such as science, mathematics, and modern language has put additional strain on an already full curriculum. The rapid rate at which knowledge is increasing, coupled with the demand for higher scholastic standards generally, has challenged our educational systems to devise additional means of handling this knowledge explosion. Many schools have attempted to solve this dilemma by merely adding more home study to the students' already crowded schedule. Recent research by the National Education Association (10) shows that 75 per cent of the elementary schools surveyed have boosted the amount of homework in recent years. However, even though it cannot be denied that large areas of knowledge have compounded the homework problem, educators find that it has been a controversial issue for many years.

Good (4), in a study of homework made in 1926, points out that the lack of ability to supervise home study, coupled with the abuses and disadvantages found in this method of learning, had led many progressive educators to insist that all homework should be abolished. He also pointed out that on the other hand, conservative educators and parents of that time contended that there were many good qualities to be fostered and developed in doing homework. Good maintained that although abuses and disadvantages did exist, this was no legitimate reason for discontinuing the practice of homework.

Doll and Fleming (3) commented on the pressures of homework. They pointed out that while homework has its vigorous proponents and equally vigorous opponents among both teachers and parents, numerous cases were found where outstanding students showed extreme anxiety and tension with regard to fulfilling homework demands. This was especially true of students whose parents drive them to keep up with work that may be too difficult for them. It was suggested that perhaps parents need education on what to expect from their children. All children are not capable of earning an "A" average, and there are many other areas in life equally important. The authors go on to say that many young people are confronted with a situation in which they are expected to work diligently at school all day and then come home at night and put in another session of several hours on the

next day's assignments. In many instances the students have to drop outside activities such as scouting, church activities, and music lessons. These are activities which are of vital importance to a child's development, too. The authors contend that there should be some safeguards to insure time to participate as a member of the family in leisure time activities of their own choosing.

Hedges (5) in researching the subject of homework had this to say about it:

The vast majority of articles reviewed consisted of the opinions of teachers, principals, professional educators, and popular writers. Happily enough, these people did not treat the argument of homework vs. no homework as the strawman it actually is: i.e. they suggested that the fundamental question is how much of what kind of homework for what child under what conditions and for what reason.

Cheek (2), in a study to determine the opinions of six diversely different populations on the subject of the necessity of homework, obtained opinion surveys from students in lower and upper elementary grades, junior high schools, parents from the four levels above, education majors and professors of education from the University of Michigan. Each of these groups gave an overwhelmingly affirmative vote on the question of the necessity of homework. Out of 205 parents responding, only seven rejected homework. In each group approximately 50 per cent questioned the nature and the amount of homework. Out of 90 teachers responding only

one desired no homework at all. Some of the comments that appeared most frequently included class periods too short to provide depth and breadth to concepts studied, so homework was not only desirable but essential. Homework assignments should be constructive in nature and interrelated with class work, not busy work. Weekends should be devoid of homework to allow students to participate in family and personal activities. This should apply to vacations, too. Scheduled curricular and extra-curricular activities should preclude lengthy homework assignments. Well constructed and meaningful presentation of a skill or concept should precede homework assignments. The amount and nature of homework should be determined by the age and grade of the student, a very minimum amount, if any, should be assigned young children. The author concluded from his poll that most students want and expect outside of school assignments, but these should be well planned, of positive learning nature, and meted out with moderation.

Kerzic (7) did a study on the value of homework in which he surveyed 748 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to determine their opinions on factors that involved homework. He found that in this group, time spent on homework ranged from no time to three hours per evening, with a mean of 62 minutes per week night spent on home study. He found that eight per cent of the students never needed help with their homework, 72 per cent needed help sometimes, 13 per cent

usually needed help, and six per cent always needed assistance. The factors most commonly listed that the students felt were detrimental to good homework were: interruptions at home, assignments that were uninteresting, and viewing television. The most beneficial factors in promoting good home study were: clear understanding of the work, materials to do the assignment, and a quiet place to study. The students felt that homework helped them get better grades and those that put in only average amounts of time felt that an hour per evening was not an unreasonable requirement. The author found that teachers were not making homework interesting to the students. He also found that a majority of parents approved homework; the rationale given for this ranged from pursuits of independent interests to "keeping Johnny off the streets". He stated that the common conclusion reached in much research dealing with home study is that homework is an important factor in improving academic achievement. This study was carried on in a community where the average parent was earning over \$12,000 per year.

A study by the National Education Association, Research Division (9) has set forth these goals for modern homework education:

1. To provide for the development of skills and practice in individual work.
2. To provide the opportunity, outside the school, for the child to learn to organize his time.

3. To provide an opportunity for the child to discover some of the resources of his home and community.
4. To stimulate voluntary effort, initiative, independence, and self direction.
5. To encourage a carry-over of worthwhile school activities into permanent leisure interests.
6. To enrich the school experience through related home activities.
7. To reinforce school learning by providing the necessary practice, integration, and application.

Hedges (5) surveyed a number of articles on homework by leading educational authorities and parents, and came up with a list of arguments for and against homework as assigned in many of the schools. Arguments commonly given in support of homework included:

1. Homework keeps parents in touch with the school program and their child's progress, thus creating a closer bond between the home and the school.
2. It teaches a child to follow directions and helps him learn to organize his time.
3. It teaches the child to accept responsibility and helps him to develop self-reliance in his work. It also teaches him improved study skills and work habits.
4. Struggling with lessons is good discipline and a builder of character.
5. Homework provides constructive use of time which otherwise might be squandered; keeps child out of mischief.
6. It reinforces school learnings and gives needed drill on work taken in class.

7. The amount of knowledge required by the curriculum simply cannot be imparted during school hours alone.

Arguments commonly given against homework include the following:

1. After six or seven hours in school a child is tired and it is too much to expect him to do homework.
2. The extra work load may reduce the interest and vigor of the child in school the next day.
3. Homework is often for the parents instead of the child and parents frequently do it in a way not approved by the teacher.
4. Parents are seldom qualified to supervise home study, it is better done under teachers' direction.
5. Homes do not always provide suitable study conditions or facilities.
6. Other educationally valuable activities such as meetings, hobbies, recreational reading, educational T. V. programs, and play may be neglected.
7. Disagreeable tasks are too often assigned for homework instead of creative, interesting assignments.
8. The harmony of family life may be jeopardized, and in many cases where the home offers cultural opportunities, the positive influence on the child's development may be reduced.
9. In some schools where homework has been abolished the sum total of achievement does not seem to have been affected.

While many of these arguments against homework contain valid criticism of home study, most of them are applicable only to cases where an excessive amount of homework

is being assigned.

Johnson (6) in doing research on homework found that educators felt that one of the first steps to take in improving homework would be to determine a valid purpose for doing it. The second important step would be to set up criteria for evaluating the work of homework activities. The author found that a consensus of opinion among educational authorities would support general criteria for evaluating homework. It was agreed that homework should serve a valid purpose and be well within the capabilities of the pupils. It was also agreed that the class should be thoroughly motivated for the work and that the assignment should grow out of school experiences. The work should extend the children's fund of information and be related to their interests. Good homework should be adapted to individual needs, interests and capacities. The students should be entirely clear about what they were to do and be able to complete the assignment without parental assistance. Teachers must consider whether the homework assignment is reasonable in view of the student's home conditions. Homework should minimize the temptation to merely copy information and the home study should be evaluated and/or used in the daily program.

There has been little authentic research on homework, and what has been done has failed to provide a definite answer to the homework problem. However, many articles have

been written on the subject and in reviewing this literature one finds that the great majority of authorities indicate that homework has merit, and is desirable, if properly administered. Homework should be an interesting experience and should encourage the student to read beyond regular course requirements. (11)

An administrator should be aware of the status of homework within his system. He should know the extent to which his faculty is using homework assignments and the effect of this home study on the lives of the students.

An administrator must see that his teachers have access to their students' previous records and guidance reports, if they are available, in order that they may have the opportunity to plan homework to meet the needs of each individual student. (8)

It is important that an administrator be informed of the opinions of his teachers, parents, and students about the usefulness of homework practices of the school, and thus be able to judge the effectiveness of the school's homework policies.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The following procedures were used in this investigation of homework:

1. A review of current studies and related literature was made.

2. Students of the Conrad Elementary School in grades four through eight were given a survey sheet to determine the amount of time spent on homework each week. The students were also asked for pertinent information regarding their home study. Survey sheets were given to 487 students and 466 were returned.

3. Parents of students in grades four through eight were given a survey sheet in which they were asked for information on their child's homework activities. Suggestions for improving homework assignments were solicited. Survey sheets were sent to 487 parents and 422 surveys were returned.

4. Teachers in grades four through eight were given survey sheets and asked to record information regarding their homework assignments. Comments and suggestions were also requested. Twenty-two faculty members were given survey sheets and all were returned.

5. Students in grades six, seven, and eight were asked to keep a log of the time spent on homework in each subject area during a given period of 15 school days. To insure greater validity the students were asked to fill out this sheet each day as part of their arithmetic assignment. The logs were kept by 292 students in grades six, seven, and eight.

6. The data obtained from these sources was tabulated for study and comparison.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In order that the interpretation of the results of this survey be better understood, it would be well to give a small amount of background on the community in which the school is located. The Conrad Elementary School is located in Conrad, Montana, county seat of Pondera County. This area is a very prosperous agricultural region and the per capita income is quite high. The people of the community are vitally interested in education as is evident by the 86.6 per cent of the parents that returned the homework survey. A large per cent of the high school graduates go on to college. Many of the parents have attended college and the majority of the parents expect their children to be prepared in our schools for college entrance. The taxpayers seldom fail to vote extra levies for buildings and

instruction.

This study has indicated that the majority of students, parents of the students, and teachers favor some form of homework. It was found that 92.3 per cent of the parents polled favored some type of homework while only 7.7 per cent of them were opposed to homework. A great number of parents qualified their endorsement of homework. The most common qualification found was that the parents favored homework if not given in too large amounts. Other comments included were that the homework should be interesting and meaningful and that the procedures and mechanics for carrying out the assignments should be well understood by the students. Many parents objected to homework being assigned on church night (Tuesday evening). Many felt that holidays and weekends should be kept free for family activities as much as possible.

The survey showed that 71.9 per cent of the students in grades four through eight favored homework. The remaining 28.1 per cent were against the practice of assigning homework. The comment that occurred most frequently on the student surveys was that the students would like their home study assignments spread out as evenly as possible and not a large amount one night and little the next. There were numerous comments on the desirability of the teachers assigning interesting homework, and many of the students were against homework assignments on church night and holidays.

The faculty indicated by their survey that 90.9 per cent of them favored some form of homework, and 9.1 per cent were not in favor of homework. Of this group of teachers surveyed, 15 indicated that they seldom assigned homework, three indicated that they often assigned homework and four of the group made a practice of assigning homework regularly.

The responses of the parents of the students, the students, and the teachers were tabulated by grades and the distribution of these responses are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "DO YOU BELIEVE HOMEWORK SHOULD BE ASSIGNED?"

Grade	Parent		Parent		Student		Student		Teacher		Teacher	
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	*No.	**%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
8	69	86.3	11	13.7	65	69.1	29	30.9	9	90.0	1	10.0
7	84	92.3	7	7.7	70	75.3	23	24.7	***	***		***
6	81	94.2	5	5.8	64	73.6	23	26.4	4	100.0	0	0
5	77	93.9	5	6.1	68	68.7	31	31.3	4	100.0	0	0
4	75	94.9	4	5.1	65	73.0	24	27.0	3	75.0	1	25.0

* Indicates number

** Indicates per cent

*** Seventh and eighth grade teachers responded for both grades-departmentalized

The parents of the students in grade eight had more objectors to homework than any other grade. This was also

true of the students of grade eight. The students in this age group are beginning to participate in more outside of school activities and therefore seem to have more conflict with homework. The teachers were strongly in favor of homework.

The students in grades four through eight were asked if they found their homework interesting. Only 31.9 per cent of the eighth graders thought their homework study interesting while 68.1 per cent found it uninteresting. In the seventh grade 53.6 per cent of the students found their homework uninteresting as opposed to 46.4 per cent who labeled it as interesting. In grade six the same trend was continued with 54.9 per cent of the students finding homework uninteresting and 45.1 per cent taking the opposite view. Grade five showed a reversal of this opinion with 64 per cent of the students indicating their homework was interesting while only 36 per cent found it uninteresting. In grade four an even larger 76.5 per cent indicated that they found homework interesting and only 23.5 per cent found it uninteresting. It might be noted here that the fifth graders did a number of projects this year and a great deal of their homework involved research and outside reading. In grade four it was found that the students spent much less time on homework and this smaller amount of assigned work could have influenced the opinions of this group.

As a point of comparison the faculty in the four grades was surveyed to determine what type of homework they assigned. Drill and preparation of assignments for class, such as reading the next chapter and answering the questions, ranked high and about equal to the use of enrichment type of assignments. Research in all four grades was used for home study, but not as extensively as the combined total of the first two types. The comments on the survey sheets turned in by the students indicated that the seventh and eighth grade groups preferred enrichment type material and research projects to the drill and textbook lesson approach in assigning homework.

The parent and student surveys included a request for an estimate on the amount of time students were spending on homework per week. The student survey was completed at school as a part of an arithmetic assignment involving averages. In addition to the estimate of time spent on homework by the student the arithmetic classes in grade six, seven and eight kept a log of homework time as part of their arithmetic work. Each student in these grades handed in a daily report sheet on the amount of time spent on homework. This record was kept for 15 days. The parental estimates, as well as the student estimates, were collected immediately before the log keeping exercise was inaugurated. This was done to prevent the results of the log keeping exercise from influencing the general estimates.

The following table indicates the findings from these three sources. (Table 2)

TABLE 2. RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "HOW MUCH TIME DOES STUDENT SPEND ON HOMEWORK PER WEEK?"

Grade	Parents' Estimate of student time spent per week on homework.		Students' Estimate of student time spent per week on homework.		Students' Record of student time spent per week on homework kept by log.	
	Number of Responses	Average Hours	Number of Responses	Average Hours	Number of Responses	Average Hours
8	80	5.4	93	4.6	101	3.9
7	91	5.2	96	5.5	99	5.3
6	86	5.4	88	5.1	92	3.6
5	86	5.4	101	5.2	--	- -
4	79	3.0	88	2.9	--	- -

It was noted that in keeping a day-by-day accounting of time spent on home study, students in grades six, and eight showed less time spent on home study than either the parents or the students themselves had estimated earlier. Grade seven provided an exception; the statistics showed little variation with either parent or student estimate. The fourth and fifth grades were not asked to keep this log. The statistics in this table also revealed that the parents, on the average, thought that the students were doing more

homework than the students themselves estimated they were doing.

The parents and students were asked to indicate whether they thought the amount of homework assigned was too much, not enough, or about the right amount. The results showed that 77.7 per cent of the parents and 65.7 per cent of the students thought that the amount of homework was about right. There were 13.7 per cent of the parents and 28.8 per cent of the students that thought too much homework was being assigned. Representing another point of view, 8.6 per cent of the parents felt there wasn't enough homework assigned and 5.5 per cent of the students felt they should have more homework.

The parents of students in the lower achieving groups in grades six, seven, and eight represented the majority of supporters for more homework. The parents having students in the higher achieving groups made up the majority indicating too much homework was being assigned.

The following table shows the breakdown of these statistics by grades. (Table 3)

TABLE 3. RESPONSES TO QUESTION "DO YOU THINK TOO MUCH, NOT ENOUGH, OR ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK IS BEING ASSIGNED?"

Grade	Parent				Student				Parent				Student			
	Too Much				Not Enough				About Right							
	*No.	**%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
3	14	17.5	38	40.6	10	12.5	2	2.1	56	70.0	54	57.3				
7	20	22.0	42	44.2	7	7.7	2	2.1	64	70.3	51	53.7				
6	10	11.6	24	27.3	9	10.5	4	4.5	67	77.9	60	63.2				
5	12	14.1	18	18.0	4	4.7	4	4.0	69	81.2	78	78.0				
4	2	2.5	11	12.8	6	7.6	14	16.2	71	89.9	61	71.0				

* Indicates number

** Indicates per cent

It has been shown in Table 3 that while the majority of students in all grades thought the amount of homework about right, both the parents and the students in grades seven and eight showed a higher per cent of dissent than is found in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Several teachers make the assignments in our departmentalized seventh and eighth grades. Comments from parents and students indicated that there was a tendency toward too much outside work on some nights and not enough on others.

The teachers were asked to give their opinions on the advisability of setting a limit on the amount of time that

a student would spend on homework each evening. Opinion was almost equally divided with 12 teachers being against this suggestion and 10 teachers in favor of a time limit. Several of the teachers raised the question of how the time limit could be effectively regulated. There was little agreement on the amount of time that should be allotted for homework if such a limit were established.

The question of whether homework results in increased academic achievement was answered affirmatively by 18 teachers and negatively by four instructors. The four dissenting teachers were instructors in the fourth and fifth grades.

Home environment is very important in contributing to the success of homework. A quiet place to study is one of the necessary attributes of a good homework environment. The student survey indicated that 322, or 71.7 per cent, of the students had a quiet place to study while 131, or 28.3 per cent, did not.

Television has become a serious competitor for out of school time. According to recent surveys, young children devote more time to television entertainment than they do to their basic subjects in school. Nielsen's surveys show that the average American subteenager these days spends approximately 23 hours a week in front of the television set. The survey made in our system indicated that our students spent 6,294 hours viewing television during an average week. This averages out to 13.9 hours per week

per student. This is approximately nine hours under the national average quoted by Nielsen. The time spent viewing ranged from no time, reported by three students, to 40 hours reported by one student in the local survey.

This same group of students spent 1664 hours per week, on the average, in reading books and magazines that were not a direct part of any school assignment. This averages out to 3.5 hours per week per student. Quite a number of students indicated they did no outside reading while a few reported as much as 20 hours per week for this activity.

Some children need help with their homework while others do not. The students, and the parents of the students, were surveyed to determine how many students needed "no help", "some help", or "a great deal of help" with their homework. By the 466 student responses it was indicated that 26.3 per cent thought they received no help; 71.6 per cent felt they needed some help; 10 students, or 2.1 per cent, said they needed a great deal of help with their homework. A similar question addressed to the parents showed quite similar results, particularly in the "no help" category, where 26.1 per cent of the parents indicated that their children needed no help with homework. There were 67.5 per cent of the parents who indicated that their children received some help. The largest differential in the figures reported by the parents and students was in the "great deal of help" category, where parents indicated that

6.4 per cent of their children needed a great deal of help. Grades seven and four led the percentages in needing a great deal of help, and grade eight worked the most independently, with only two students designated by parents as needing a great deal of help.

Education of a student involves much more than the learning a child acquires at school. The family and the church are also very influential in contributing to a child's total development. Music lessons, scouts, and other activities and organizations outside the school play an important role in preparing the student for life. If too much homework is required by the school it impairs or limits the contributions and influence of these other areas. To determine the status of homework in the Conrad Elementary School the survey asked the opinions of the parents, students, and teachers with reference to whether homework was interfering with family activities, church activities, music lessons, scouts and other similar organizations. The parent survey indicated that 30.7 per cent of this group felt that homework did interfere with one or more of these activities. The remaining 69.3 per cent felt that it did not interfere. The student survey showed 44 per cent of the students felt that homework interfered with outside activities and 56 per cent of this group reported that it did not interfere. The faculty survey listed 22.7 per cent of the group as feeling that homework interfered with outside activities, while a

strong 77.3 per cent felt that their assignments were not interfering with the students' outside activities.

The student survey asked the student to designate the areas in which homework interfered, in case he felt there was interference from this source. Church activities headed the list of areas conflicting with homework and family activities ranked a close second. Music lessons were placed third in the student ratings.

The following table indicates the results of the opinion survey with responses listed by groups and grade levels. (Table 4)

TABLE 4. RESPONSES TO QUESTION "DOES HOMEWORK INTERFERE WITH STUDENTS' OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES SUCH AS CHURCH, MUSIC SCOUTS, OR FAMILY ACTIVITIES?"

Grade	Parent Yes		Parent No		Student Yes		Student No		Teachers Yes		Teachers No	
	*No. **%		No. %		No. %		No. %		No. %		No. %	
	*No.	**%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
8	29	36.3	51	63.7	58	61.7	36	38.3	3	30.0	7	70.0
7	33	36.3	58	63.7	53	57.0	40	43.0	***		***	
6	23	27.9	62	72.1	33	38.0	54	62.0	1	25.0	3	75.0
5	29	34.5	55	65.5	45	44.6	56	55.4	1	25.0	3	75.0
4	14	17.7	65	82.3	15	16.9	74	83.1	2	50.0	2	50.0

* Indicates number

** Indicates per cent

*** Seventh and eighth grade teachers responded for both grades-departmentalized

Statistics in Table 4 indicate a wider spread in the viewpoints of parents and students than on any other items in the survey. In each grade, excepting the fourth, there was a considerable spread between the number of parents who thought homework interfered with outside activities and the number of students who shared this feeling. The teachers and the parents came closer to being in agreement on the amount of interference of homework with outside activities. This could indicate that maturity might be an influencing factor in the opinions. Grade four parents and students are close to agreement on this question, but a higher percentage of the teachers in this grade felt that there was interference with outside activities than any other faculty group.

The statistics in this chapter indicate the opinions of the parents, students, and teachers in the Conrad Elementary School. In the following chapter the significance of these statistics as they apply to this system is discussed.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The concern of teachers, school officials, pupils, and parents led to a study of the homework situation in the Conrad Elementary School.

The basic purpose of this study was to investigate homework in the Conrad Elementary School. Specifically, the writer attempted to learn what the attitudes of parents, students, and teachers were regarding homework in this community. The study was also designed to find the amount of time spent on homework assignments, and to solicit suggestions for improving the homework program.

The procedures followed included a review of current studies and related literature. Survey sheets were distributed to students of the Conrad Elementary School in grades four through eight. The students were questioned regarding the average amount of time they spent on homework each week. They were also asked for other pertinent information concerning their homework activities. Parents of students in grades four through eight were surveyed to obtain information on their child's homework activities. Faculty members in grades four through eight were asked to complete a survey sheet on which they recorded information regarding their homework assignments. Suggestions for improving the homework program were solicited on each of the survey sheets.

A log was kept by the students in grades six, seven, and eight to determine the actual time spent on homework during a 15 day period.

It was learned that the parents, students, and teachers in the Conrad community are strongly in favor of homework. A majority of each of the three groups surveyed indicated satisfaction with the amount of homework required in this system. There was some disagreement as to the type of homework that was being assigned. Several students and parents suggested that more assignments be based on research and enrichment activities.

It was found that on the average the students in the Conrad Elementary School spent 4.7 hours per week on home study. The average amount of time spent ranged from 2.9 hours in the fourth grade to a high of 5.5 hours per week in the seventh grade. The students in grades six, seven and eight kept a daily log of the time spent on homework over a 15 day period. Statistics from the log showed that students in grades six and eight were spending less time on their homework than they, or their parents, had estimated. Log time reported by seventh grade students was very close to the estimated time of both parents and students.

The parent survey indicated that some parents of students in the lowest achieving group were inclined to favor more homework than was being assigned. Parents favoring

less homework for their children were more likely to have students in the highest achievement level.

Comments from parents and students indicated that in the seventh and eighth grades there was a tendency toward too much homework on some nights and not enough on others. This was due in part to the departmentalization of major subject areas in these grades.

Teachers were divided in their opinions on the effectiveness of a time limit on homework. Chief concern centered on the ability to administer such a regulation effectively.

The majority of the faculty (81.8 per cent) agreed that homework increased the academic achievement of the students.

The survey indicated that the home environment in the community was conducive to home study. Approximately 70 per cent of the students had a quiet place in which to carry on their homework activities.

Television has become a serious competitor for out-of-school time in our community. The survey showed that on the average the Conrad students spent approximately three times as much time viewing television as they did on their homework. The time spent by the students reading books and magazines outside of school hours was found to be about one fourth of the average time spent viewing television.

A majority of the students (67.5 per cent) in the Conrad Elementary School received some help from the parents on homework assignments. Approximately one fourth of the students worked independently and received no help on their assignments. A small segment of the school population needed a great deal of assistance with their homework.

A majority of the parents (69.3 per cent) indicated that homework assignments did not seriously interfere with outside school activities of their children. A majority of the students (56 per cent) agreed with their parents on this issue. However, over half of the seventh and eighth grade students felt that homework did curtail their involvement in outside activities. Church activities, family activities, and music lessons were listed by the students as the areas where homework interfered most seriously. The teachers felt that their assignments had little effect on the outside activities of the students.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this study several conclusions may be drawn concerning homework in the Conrad Elementary School.

The majority of parents, students, and teachers in this community were in accord with the practice of assigning homework for the students.

The average amount of time spent by the students on home study was not excessive. It was well within the limits

recommended by authorities. While the average amount of time spent by students on homework was acceptable there were still some students who were spending more time on homework than they should.

The majority of the parents and students did not think that homework was interfering with outside activities. However, there was a sizeable group that held the opposite point of view. This problem warrants further study.

Students in the higher achieving groups were doing more homework than many of the students in the lower achieving groups.

There was a general feeling among the students in the upper grades that there was too much inconsistency in the length of assignments. This group also recommended more interesting homework assignments.

Setting a time limit on the amount of homework to be done each evening would not be a popular solution to our homework problem.

Television was an important factor in the judicious use of out of school time.

Parents were providing conditions that are conducive to effective home study in most of the homes.

A large number of the students needed some help with their homework. This is an area that warrants further faculty consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer is of the opinion that homework is necessary for the development of a student to his full academic potential. However, homework assignments should be regulated to meet the needs of the students and not become a detriment to his health, nor should it interfere with his family life, social life, or extra-curricular activities. Care and good judgement should be exercised in making assignments for home study. Every effort should be made to eliminate pressures and tensions caused by excessive homework.

In the grades that are departmentalized, teachers should plan together in correlating the homework assignments.

Special consideration should be given to homework assignments on church night and evenings when special school activities are scheduled. Weekends should be kept as free as possible for the student to participate in family activities. No assignments should be made over holidays.

Teachers should be cognizant of the individual differences that exist among their students and make homework assignments accordingly. Adjustment of assignments should be made for students who have been found to be overloaded with homework activities.

Frequent surveys should be taken to determine the status of homework assignments.

The directions and processes for completing homework assignments should be thoroughly understood by the students before they go home.

Homework assignments should be varied and made as interesting as possible. Unnecessary homework should be eliminated.

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APPENDIX

Dear Parents:

We are making a study of the homework situation in our elementary school (grades four through eight). We would appreciate your co-operation in assisting us in this study by filling out the following questionnaire. We ask that you fill out a questionnaire for each of your children in order that we may have information for each grade level. No signature is necessary. We hope to use the information gathered in developing a more satisfactory homework program.

1. Approximately how much time does your child spend on homework per week, including weekends? _____ hours _____ minutes.

(CHECK DESIRED ANSWER)

2. Does your child work independently on his homework or does he usually need? _____no help _____some help _____a great deal of help.
3. Do homework assignments in your home often interfere with church activities, music lessons, scouts, or family activities? _____yes _____no.
4. Do you feel the time your child spends on homework is worthwhile? _____yes _____no.
5. Do you feel that your child is doing _____too much homework _____not enough homework _____about the right amount of homework?
6. Are you in favor of your child having homework? _____yes _____no.

Students:

We are making a study of homework assignments in our school and would like to have you answer the questions in this survey as accurately and honestly as possible. You are not asked to put your name on this paper. Please place a check mark to indicate your answer, where applicable.

1. Do you usually have school work to do at home?
_____yes _____no.
2. About how much time per week do you spend doing school work outside of school hours? _____hours
_____minutes.
3. If you do homework, how much help do you need with your homework at home? _____no help _____some help
_____a great deal of help.
4. Do you find most of the homework assignments interesting? _____yes _____no.
5. Do your homework assignments often interfere with church activities, music lessons, scouts, or family activities? _____yes _____no. (If answer is yes, please indicate which activities are interfered with the most)
6. Do you feel that students should be assigned homework? _____yes _____no.
7. Do you feel that you are being assigned _____too much homework _____not enough homework _____about the right amount of homework?

8. Do you have a quiet place to study at home? _____yes
_____no.
9. How much time do you spend viewing television per week?
(On the average) _____hours _____minutes.
10. How much time do you spend reading books and magazines
outside of school hours per week? (Material that has not
been assigned by the teachers) _____hours _____minutes.
11. Do you take band? _____yes _____no. Chorus? _____yes
_____no.

Faculty Members:

This survey is designed to obtain the teachers' opinions on homework. Homework surveys have been given to the parents and students in grades four through eight. Results of these surveys will be made available when we have completed compilation. No signatures are needed on this survey, but please indicate the grade level for which this information is applicable. Thank you.

Grade _____

1. Are you in favor of some type of homework for students? _____yes _____no.
2. Do you assign homework for your students to complete outside of school hours? _____seldom _____often
_____regularly.
3. How much time do you feel that a student should put in (on the average) on all homework outside of school hours per night? _____maximum _____minimum
_____per week.
4. Do you think that homework should be assigned over holiday or vacation periods during the school year?
_____yes _____no _____occasionally.
5. How much time (maximum) do you feel that a student should spend on home study over a weekend?
_____hours _____minutes.

6. Do you think that homework should be assigned on Tuesday evening? (church night for our students)
_____yes _____no.
7. If you are in favor of homework, what type of homework do you recommend? (1) drill (2) preparation of assignments for class such as doing advanced math assignments, reading next chapter and answering the questions, etc. (3) enrichment material such as special reports, outside reading, etc. (4) research (5) other- (explain)
8. If homework is to be assigned, do you believe it should be assigned individually for students or the same assignment given for the whole class?
_____individually _____class.
9. Are you in favor of a limit on the amount of time a student must spend on homework per evening?
_____yes _____no.
10. If answer is yes, what maximum limit would you suggest for your grade level?
_____per evening _____per week.
11. Do you think that homework results in increased academic achievement? _____yes _____no.
12. Do you think that homework assignments in our school interfere with the students' opportunity to participate in church activities, music lessons,

organizations, scouts, or family activities?

_____yes _____no.

13. How do you feel the amount of homework should be controlled so that it will not become excessive?

Comments: