

Homework → Summary of the Research Findings

The reasons we are determined to improve quality and consistency of homework across the school are many. They are to:

- Reinforce the high expectations regarding academic foundations set in classes;
- Strengthen the thinking and learning dispositions and therefore intellectual character;
- Provide sound foundations of good learning habits such as, organisation, discipline, love of learning and the realisation that learning goes beyond the school;
- Follow the scope and sequences across all Key Learning Areas;
- Ensure a consistent approach across the school;
- Continue to provide a differentiated approach to Home Learning with non- negotiable and optional choices;
- Take away the stigma of homework being 'more work' by renaming homework to Home Learning (NB 'Home Learning' will now be used throughout this article, except within a direct quote from a reference referring to 'homework');
- Provide quality and relevant research-based approaches to Home Learning;
- Allow for family life to continue to be factored in;
- Understand that Home Learning is not more activities, it's often about going deeper with current activities; and
- Reduce the tension between parents and staff about Home Learning expectations by providing clear guidelines.

The Case for Home Learning

The research, while varied, has common themes and recommendations. Martin (2019) suggests that 'homework does little to improve achievement in Primary School: younger children are not particularly good at doing homework. To get better, they need practice. It takes time to develop the vital knowledge, skills, and self-direction required to do homework effectively (indeed, we wouldn't abandon soccer practice in the younger years just because children weren't scoring goals!).'

Marzano and Pickering (2007) site the meta-analysis of Cooper (1989) which reported an effect size of 6% gain for Grades 4 to 6 for students who do homework, and while homework has a smaller effect size in lower grades, Cooper says 'homework for young children should help them develop good study habits, foster positive attitudes toward school, and communicate to students the idea that learning takes work at home as well as at school' (p.90).

James Nottingham spoke to our staff in 2018 about the value of 'preview learning' rather than the traditional style of homework, and to practise skills already learned, and it was his suggestion to us that 'homework' be renamed as 'Home Learning'. The value of preview learning according to Nottingham is that it is a way for students to gather information prior to the planned lessons, at the pre, uni-structural and even multi-structural levels of learning (see SOLO Taxonomy in Appendix section), so that relational and abstract levels of learning can occur in class. Nottingham says 'preview learning can be valuable in place of traditional homework because it enables students to bring some prior knowledge to class'. Over the past

3 years students and parents from Claremont College have already seen preview learning become a part of Home Learning.

Our staff who have utilised preview learning, have reported a significant change to the student enthusiasm, readiness and engagement, when students have done some prior research and therefore have some prior knowledge to bring to class. Remember research doesn't always have to be completed online, it can be through reading, watching a documentary or sitting with parents or grandparents and asking them what they know about a particular topic. An older brother or sister can also help with preview learning in some cases. If for example, the PE teacher says the focus in the coming weeks will be ball skills, this would be an ideal time to go outside and practise kicking, hitting or throwing a ball with siblings and/or neighbourhood friends.

Preview learning is not about writing things down, creating a presentation or bringing in copious notes, even though some students like to do this. The quality of the preview learning comes from the knowledge the child has and the way they are then able to use that knowledge to go deeper with their learning.

The evidence we have seen from preview learning so far includes:

- Students have prior insights of the topic knowledge to share with their peers and therefore confidence to do so;
- The lower-order practices of unistructural and multi-structural (SOLO) gathering of knowledge and understanding, take up less class time;
- Students are ready sooner, to engage in relational and even extended abstract levels of understanding;
- Preview learning has been helpful for students who like to 'go beyond', explore further into a topic and thereby 'feeding their hunger to learn';
- Preview learning has also been helpful for students who find it harder to grasp new concepts as they are now eager and more confident to engage in new topics because of their prior knowledge; and
- Students are given verbal feedback when they contribute to discussions and activities drawing on their prior learning.

It is important to note that preview learning is not marked or graded, and written feedback is not provided for preview learning, and nor do any of these practices need to occur. On the spot verbal feedback about a child's prior learning is the most valuable feedback a child can receive. Therefore, it would also be useful for parent/s to provide the opportunity for verbal feedback by starting a dinnertime discussion about current learning.

James Nottingham also spoke to us about the research from Hattie (2016) showing how reading every night improves student learning, and obviously their reading. The benefits of daily reading go far beyond academic growth, they include social and emotional well-being, and relaxation.

Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) in Marzano and Pickering (2007) noted, "With only rare exceptions, the relationship between the amount of homework students do and their achievement outcomes was found to be positive and statistically significant.

Therefore, we think it would be imprudent, based on the evidence at hand, to conclude that doing homework causes improved academic achievement” (p48).

The Case Against Home Learning

The arguments for and against Home Learning are often very emotive and varied. Claremont College believes that some forms of Home Learning have benefits and we therefore have a Home Learning Policy, however, it is also worth pointing out the down side of Home Learning.

Kralovec and Buell (2000) in Marzano and Pickering (2007), asserted that ‘homework contributes to a corporate style, competitive US culture that overvalues work to the detriment of personal and familial well-being’, while Bennett and Kalish (2006) also in Marzano and Pickering (2007), provided evidence that ‘too much homework harms students health and family time’.

Kohn (2006, p166) says ‘research fails to demonstrate homework’s effectiveness as an instructional tool’ and that homework assigned should be ‘beneficial’. Kohn suggests ‘ideally involving students in activities appropriate for the home, such as performing an experiment in the kitchen, cooking, doing crossword puzzles with the family, watching good TV shows, or reading’.

Time Spent on Home Learning

Cooper, Robinson and Patall (2006) researched the amount of time spent on Home Learning, and through their findings they cautioned ‘there are no hard and fast rules’. They advised that ‘homework must be realistic in length and difficulty given the students’ ability to work independently’. Cooper (2007) in Marzano and Pickering (2007), suggested that research findings support the common ‘10-minute rule’ (p92), which states that all daily Home Learning assignments combined should take about as long to complete as 10 minutes multiplied by the student’s grade level’, and this is increased to include reading. He goes on to say, ‘focussing on the amount of time students spend on homework, however, may miss the point. A significant proportion of research on homework indicates that the positive effects of homework relate to the amount of homework that the student *completes* rather than the amount of time spent on homework or the amount of homework actually assigned’.

Therefore, at Claremont College we will continue to have the following guidelines for Home Learning: A maximum of the following times for each grade regarding amount of time the students can focus independently.

Maximum times per day:

- Kindergarten, 5 minutes + Reading
- Year 1, 10 minutes + Reading
- Year 2, 20 minutes + Reading
- Year 3, 30 minutes + Reading
- Year 4, 40 minutes + Reading
- Year 5, 50 minutes + Reading
- Year 6, 60 minutes + Reading

If you wish to find other structured Home Learning opportunities, we recommend that you consider music lessons for your child/ren. In his book *Australia Reimagined*, Hugh Mackay cites David Gillespie's research ('Free Schools') '... the most consistent positive effect on academic performance is from students who do music, or play in the school band...'. Eminent Australian conductor and educator Richard Gill has always maintained that not only listening to music develops areas of the brain that other activities don't, but that actually making music and especially composing music are breakthrough experiences in our cognitive and emotional development'. We also highly recommend sport and other extracurricular activities. Home Learning comes in many forms and from many sources.

Please speak to your child's class teacher if you need to negotiate the compulsory tasks time allocation where tutoring and/or other specialists (Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, etc) are occurring outside school. Parents are best placed to determine (in consultation with the classroom teacher/s) if the school Home Learning times allocated need to be adjusted.

Parental Involvement

We understand that Home Learning can be a source of enjoyment for some, however for many it can be a time of frustration. 'Some studies have reported minimal positive effects for parental involvement. In addition, many parents report that they feel unprepared to help their children with homework and that their efforts to help frequently cause stress' (Balli 1998; Corno 1996; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow 1995; Perkins & Milgrim 1996, as cited in Marzano and Pickering 2007).

It is especially useful if parents talk to their child/ren about their Home Learning; engage in conversations about what they are learning and even ask them if they know why they are learning it using Nottingham's 3 questions from *Challenging Learning Through Feedback* (2017):

- 1. What are you trying to achieve?**
- 2. How much progress have you made?**
- 3. What should you do next?**

Ultimately for a child to increase their independence we aim for each child to ask these three questions of themselves.

- 1. What am I trying to achieve?**
- 2. How much progress have I made?**
- 3. What should I do next?**

Home Learning and Feedback

Over the past 3 years our staff at Claremont College have been learning from the research of James and Jill Nottingham, in particular their text, *Challenging Learning Through Feedback* (2017). There are many key points raised that are equally relevant at home as they are at school.

The first being 'praise is not the same as feedback' (p14). Nottingham explains that feedback relates to the process of what is trying to be achieved and answers the 3 questions above. Whereas praise focuses on the end product, or the child's behaviour. Praise is nice and can make you feel good (Aren't you being a good boy. That's nice work you've done there. You make me so proud.), but should not be confused with feedback for learning. Nottingham says, 'it is important, however, to distinguish between praise that directs attention to the student and praise directed to the effort, self-regulation, engagement or processes relating to the learning. The later type of praise can assist in enhancing self-efficacy and can therefore help with the learning process' (p15).

'What' and 'when' are more important than praise itself – praise the learning not the learner. NB Be very aware of praising compliant girls, who view praise as equating to their self-worth.

Real feedback improves student learning when it is specifically related to the learning intentions and the success criteria (Hattie 2012), and 'feedback is more powerful when it is personalised'. Nottingham gives the following phrases that might help at home:

- What you did there was powerful.
- That was a moving performance.
- What you've written here is interesting.
- You make a significant point.
- That made me laugh/think/wonder.
- I learned something about this topic from you.
- I learned something about your interests.
- I never thought about that before.
- It's interesting that you think X. Have you ever thought about Y?

'Dialogue is the most immediate way of giving feedback to students', and when done during the process of learning there are opportunities for the child to engage in dialogue with their parent about their learning. During this form of dialogue, the parent is guiding the child, not telling them how to 'fix' things. Guide your child's learning by asking the following questions:

- 1. Tell me what are you trying to achieve?**
- 2. How much progress do you think you have you made?**
- 3. What do you think you should do next?**

All students need feedback. 'Even the best students need guidance to improve, and of course, some might need an extra push to reach their potential, or even go beyond it.' (Hattie, 2012, p24).

Finally, feedback needs to be timely. In most cases, especially with the younger students, feedback the next day will have no effect on student learning. The child has moved on and cannot recall what they did or why they answered a question in a particular way. Sadly 'too many teachers (and parents) worry that feedback doesn't count unless it is written down. Others spend hours writing feedback in students' books more to impress school leaders and students' parents, than for the sake of the students' learning. Leaders and parents should concern themselves with looking for evidence of impact on student learning rather than whether teachers have *written* enough feedback' (p33).

The most important aspect of feedback is what has been received, and by generating dialogue the correct feedback is more likely to be received than by writing it down. 'The quality of feedback should be judged not on what is transmitted but on what is received and applied.'(p1)

"Effective feedback doubles the speed of learning."

Dylan Wiliam

The Focus of Home Learning at Claremont College

Therefore, our staff and students through Home Learning now focus on the following research-based practices:

- Daily reading;
- Some daily repetitive tasks such as learning sight words in Kindergarten and times tables in Year 3 & 4;
- Tasks that provide immediate feedback, such as those available through online learning platforms, so that students receive feedback during their learning;
- Preview learning; and
- Various optional tasks.

Our Home Learning Guidelines for 2021

Infants

	Compulsory	Optional
Kindergarten	<p>Reading: 10 mins reading a reader each night (Starting in Term 1 Week 5)</p> <p>Sight Words Reading Sight words (5 words at a time) (Starting in Term 1 Week 5)</p> <p>Maths: Starting from Term 2 - One Matific Task Term 3 and Term 4 Two Matific Tasks</p>	<p>Preview Learning</p> <p>Reading Eggs</p>
Year 1	<p>Reading: 10 mins reading a reader each night</p> <p>Sight words/Spelling Reading and Spelling Sight words (5 words at a time)</p> <p>Maths: Two Matific Tasks</p>	<p>Preview Learning</p> <p>Reading Eggs</p>
Year 2	<p>Reading: 10 mins reading a reader each night</p> <p>Sight words/Spelling Reading and Spelling Sight words as required (10 words at a time)</p> <p>Maths: Two Matific Tasks</p>	<p>Preview Learning</p> <p>Reading Eggs</p>

Primary

	Compulsory	Optional
Year 3	<p>Reading: 20 mins reading a reader each night Comprehension Activity</p> <p>Maths: Three Matific Tasks Times tables task</p>	<p>One Preview Learning task</p> <p>Spelling Mastery - After each test, students write down misspelt words on a template (see Appendix) and stick into their own diaries</p>
Year 4	<p>Reading: 20 mins reading a reader each night Comprehension Activity</p> <p>Maths: Three Matific Tasks Times tables task</p> <p>Music: 5 mins of Ukulele a night or 30mins a week</p>	<p>One Preview Learning task</p> <p>Spelling Mastery - After each test, students write down misspelt words on a template (see Appendix) and stick into their own diaries</p>
Year 5	<p>Reading: 20 mins reading a reader each night Comprehension Activity</p> <p>Maths: Three Matific Tasks Times tables - optional for those who need it</p>	<p>Two Preview Learning tasks</p> <p>Spelling Mastery - After each test, students write down misspelt words on a template (see Appendix) and stick into their own diaries</p>
Year 6	<p>Reading: 20 mins reading a reader each night Comprehension Activity Grammar Activity</p> <p>Maths: Three Matific Tasks Unfinished classwork</p>	<p>Two Preview Learning tasks</p> <p>Spelling Mastery - After each test, students write down misspelt words on a template (see Appendix) and stick into their own diaries</p>

** Please note: As students complete the Spelling Mastery Level F, they will move to application of spelling and vocabulary in written expression and will therefore not have spelling practice.*

Specialist lessons:

Specialist teachers may assign preview learning tasks for Infants from time to time. Optional clips and online activities may also be posted on Seesaw and mentioned in the grid.

Primary specialist lessons may have assessments or projects assigned from time to time. This will be communicated with the class teacher to ensure the students are not overloaded with work at any given time. Specialist home learning tasks will be assigned in plenty of advance with a due date so that students learn to time manage appropriately.

Appendix

- SOLO Taxonomy Visual (from James Nottingham – Challenging Learning)
- SOLO Taxonomy Explained from your child’s point of view
- SOLO Taxonomy and The Learning Pit
- Spelling Mastery Words Template

SOLO Taxonomy Visual (from James Nottingham – Challenging Learning)

REF. <https://www.challenginglearning.com/resources/images/solo-taxonomy-portrait-1/>

The SOLO Taxonomy

Theory by John Biggs & Kevin Collis. Designed and abridged by James Nottingham

Prestructural
You know nothing about the topic

Unistructural
You know one or two things about the topic

Multistructural
You know know lots about the topic

Relational
You can explain connections and inter-relationships within the topic

Extended Abstract
You can evaluate the significance of the topic and apply your understanding to other contexts

Challenging
LEARNING
www.challenginglearning.com

SOLO Taxonomy Explained from your child's point of view:

REF. https://www.google.com/search?tbm=isch&sa=1&ej=OY4mXvKMKLuQ4-EPvluq8As&q=solo+taxonomy+posters&og=solo+taxonomy+posters&gs_l=img.3.0i24.112292.114881..115449...0.0.0.709.4876.0i3i5i1i2i2i1.....0...1...gws-wiz-img.....0j0i8i30.DRYOctPlwWQ&ved=0ahUKEwivjb39_JPnAhU7vDgGHbyFCr4Q4dUDCAc&uact=5#imgrc=7aoka50LHfpGsM:

SOLO TAXONOMY EXPLAINED

PRE STRUCTURAL...

Diagram: A blue circle inside a square frame.

Character: A brown rabbit.

Speech bubbles: "CAN YOU HELP ME START?", "I DON'T GET IT!", "I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS"

UNI STRUCTURAL...

Diagram: A vertical blue bar inside a square frame.

Character: A white rabbit with a blue bow.

Speech bubbles: "I CAN DEFINE THE KEY WORDS", "I CAN DESCRIBE MY IDEA", "I'VE GOT ONE IDEA ABOUT THIS.", "I CAN FOLLOW A ONE STEP PROCEDURE"

MULTI STRUCTURAL...

Diagram: Three vertical blue bars inside a square frame.

Character: A brown rabbit holding several small cards.

Speech bubbles: "LOOK AT ME! I'VE GOT LOTS OF IDEAS", "I CAN LIST AND DESCRIBE MY IDEAS", "BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO LINK THEM TOGETHER"

RELATIONAL...

Diagram: Three vertical blue bars with arrows pointing up and down between them, inside a square frame.

Character: A brown rabbit with colorful blocks.

Speech bubbles: "I CAN EXPLAIN WHY THINGS HAPPEN AND APPLY MY IDEAS", "I CAN CLASSIFY AND SEQUENCE", "I CAN LINK MY IDEAS TOGETHER", "I CAN COMPARE AND CONTRAST DIFFERENT THINGS"

EXTENDED ABSTRACT...

Diagram: Three vertical blue bars with a globe and arrows, inside a square frame.

Character: A white rabbit with a red bow.

Speech bubbles: "I CAN MAKE PREDICTIONS AND WRITE HYPOTHESES", "I CAN EVALUATE AND GENERALISE USING MY IDEAS", "I CAN APPLY MY IDEAS TO NEW CONTEXTS AND SUBJECTS", "I CAN IMAGINE AND CREATE NEW THINGS USING MY IDEAS"

SOLO Taxonomy and The Learning Pit

<https://corwin-connect.com/2017/06/learning-challenge-qa-james-nottingham/>



References

Bennett, S., & Kalish, N. (2006). *The case against homework: How homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it*. New York: Crown.

Cooper, H. (1989). *Homework*. White Plains, NY: Longman

Cooper, H., Robinson, J. C., & Patall, E. A. (2006). Does homework improve academic achievement? A synthesis of research, 1987–2003. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(1), 1–62.

Hattie, J. A. (1992). Measuring the effects of schooling. *Australian Journal of Education*, 36(1), 5–13.

Hattie J., Fisher DB., Frey N. (2016). *Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*, Corwin Literacy.

Kohn, A. (2006a). *The homework myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

Kralovec, E., & Buell, J. (2000). *The end of homework: How homework disrupts families, overburdens children, and limits learning*. Boston: Beacon

Mackay, H. (2019) *Australia Reimagined, Towards a More Compassionate, Less Anxious Society*

Martin, A. (2019) <https://www.smh.com.au/education/the-benefits-of-homework-may-not-be-immediately-apparent-20190222-p50zj6.html>

Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2007). *Response to Kohn's allegations*. Centennial, CO: Marzano & Associates.

Nottingham

Nottingham, J. & Nottingham, J. (2017). *Challenging Learning Through Feedback*