

I-Search Paper: Draft 1

My topic is whether or not parents should help their children with homework. I feel that if a child needs help with their homework, then a parent should definitely be there to help them. I chose this as my topic because I want to show parents that helping children with their homework can help children develop good working habits, it gives them the help they need, it helps them be prepared for what they will be doing in the classroom, it helps them learn more, and makes them even better parents. I will gather the information needed by coming up with research questions that need to be answered about this topic. Then I will find a debate of the topic online. This way I can see views from a number of different people. I will then take their opinions and either support them or argue them using facts I find online.

To research this topic, I went online to www.nytimes.com and found a debate titled “Should Parents Help Their Children with Homework?” I found six people with six different opinions. Some said that parents should help their children form good work habits, but not help them with the actual homework. Others said that homework is just pointless anyway. One made a point that not everyone has the same resources. Then another said just let children learn all on their own. I feel as though half of these people help support my opinion, but the other half do not. So after reading this debate, I came up with four research questions. I searched for the answers to my questions online. I was able to find them on www.cesdp.nmhu.edu and www.alfiekohn.org. I found that helping children with their homework is just as helpful as teaching them good work habits. I also found that it is good for children to work on their homework themselves, but they can't start off that way. Parents should also help their children if they are doing their homework wrong. Finally, I learned that homework does not even really help children in the future anyway. I will organize all the information I found by first asking the

four questions I came up with. Then I will go on to answer these questions using the opinions of people from the debate and also the answers to my questions that I found online.

My first question is, is teaching children good homework habits better than actually helping them with their homework? Assistant professor of educational psychology Erica Patall states on the [New York Times](#) site that “Students who have a clearly defined routine around homework are more likely to believe they can overcome challenges while doing homework, take more responsibility for learning, and ultimately do better in school.” It is true that teaching a good habit such as a routine benefits the child when doing homework. However, Patall also claims that “Parent help can backfire when it involves providing instruction on homework content.” This can also be true if the parent attempts to just do the homework for their child, but that does not mean that parents should not help their children at all. According to [cesdp.nmhu.edu](#), the amount of help a parent gives their child depends on what grade they are in. The younger the child, the more help they will need ([www.cesdp.nmhu.edu](#)). The website says for parents to do some problems with their child, then watch the child do some on their own. Finally, when they are done, check to make sure they did it right ([www.cesdp.nmhu.edu](#)). If they did, praise them ([www.cesdp.nmhu.edu](#)). If they did them wrong tell them what they did wrong and then teach them how to fix it ([www.cesdp.nmhu.edu](#)). So the answer to this question is that both teaching children good homework habits and helping them on homework are both equally important.

My next question is, is autonomy helpful when it comes to homework? Writer Jessica Lahey states on the [New York Times](#) site that “the children of autonomy-supportive parents are subsequently better able to complete tasks on their own when that parent is not present.” This is true, however, Lahey also claims that “Parents should help students with their homework by

being mindful of the purpose of high-quality assignments.” So she is not telling parents not to help their children with homework, but just be careful with how you help them. Cesdp.nmhu.edu states that while it is okay for parents to help their children with homework, they should try to avoid doing their homework for them because teachers need to see where the child is having trouble. So the answer to my question is yes, autonomy is important when children are doing homework. However, this does not mean that you should not help them.

My next question is, is letting your child turn in homework that’s incorrect actually helping them in the long run? Former high school teacher and author, Martha Brockenbrough states on the [New York Times](http://NewYorkTimes) site that “My daughters handed in homework that’s less than perfect. And this might look like incompetence, but when I see it, I see learning in progress.” She is saying that the mistakes her children make on their homework help the teachers see what they are doing wrong and help them in the long run which is absolutely true. Brockenbrough also claims that “My job is to ensure the girls have supplies, fuel, routines and the principles that support the work. This means snacks, sharp pencils, no distractions, and clear expectations about completing work and handing it in. I occasionally answer simple questions about the process that keep my kids moving along.” Again, this is completely accurate. Parents jobs are to give their children everything they need to succeed, not to fix the mistakes they have made so they get a good grade. That is not going to help them out in the long run. So the answer to my question is yes, letting your child turn in homework with wrong answers does benefit them.

My last question is, is there even a point of homework at such young age in the first place? Writer Alfie Kohn states on the [New York Times](http://NewYorkTimes) site that “The main effects of making children work what amounts to a second shift when they get home from a full day in school are: frustration, exhaustion, family conflict (whether or not the parent decides to help), less time for

pleasurable activities, and diminished interest in learning.” Kohn is basically saying that giving children extra work to do at home will make them even more less likely to learn when they get to school the next day because they will be annoyed, tired, and unhappy. Especially since they probably did not get any free time the day before. Co-author Sara Bennett states on the [New York Times](#) site that “Almost all research shows that elementary school homework is pointless. If families understood that, they would be thrilled to lose that nightly routine where the adults cajole and bribe, and the kids cry and throw tantrums” This is completely true. It would save parents and children so much time and energy if teachers would just see that homework is pointless. In fact, on Kohn’s website, [alfiekohn.org](#), he claims that there is no evidence that giving homework to elementary and middle schoolers has any benefit academically. So the answer to my question is no. There is no point in giving homework to younger kids.

In conclusion, parents should help their children with homework. It was proven that both teaching children good homework habits and helping them on their homework are both equally important. Even though autonomy is important too, parents should still help their child with homework if they need it. Then finally letting your child turn in homework with wrong answers does benefit them however you should still answer any questions they might have.

I feel that starting off with finding a debate online was a great way to start conducting my research. It really helped me understand how different people felt about the topic. It also helped me answer all the research questions I had. As did the other site I found. Researching the questions I had online was also very helpful when trying to learn more about the topic. I feel that typing this i-search paper was helpful for tips on how to write future research papers.

Reference Page

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- National Education Association, How Parents can Help with Homework, www.cesdp.nmhu.edu
- Alfie Kohn, Rethinking Homework, www.alfiekohn.org