Addressing Student Mental Health Through the Lens of Homework Stress

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Abstract

Homework is a pervasive and controversial practice, and a common culprit for producing academic stress in students. While there are many arguments for and against this practice, this study sought to examine the underlying rationale for homework, the various experiences of differing populations of students related to homework and its resulting stress, and possible alleviating measures to prevent these negative outcomes. By examining these elements through the lens of Activity Theory, a disconnect between the tools we give students and the intended outcome of homework becomes more apparent. Through a comprehensive review of literature and interview data, the findings of this study demonstrated a clear need for a reexamination of the role of homework for educators, and the need for responsive techniques whenever the practice is warranted to prevent negative mental health outcomes due to homework stress.

Keywords: homework, stress, mental health
The outcomes of adolescent mental health is a threat to students' health and wellbeing, more so than it ever has been in the modern era. As of 2019, the CDC reported a nearly 40 percent increase in feelings of sadness or hopelessness over the last ten years, and similar increases in feelings of anxiety as well as suicidal ideation (CDC, 2019). Additionally, these figures were gathered before the Covid-19 pandemic, so the effects are compounded, making investigation into reversing this trend even more pressing. When faced with the question of how to address this crisis we as teachers can often feel at a loss, but we can often look to our own standard practices that we take for granted. When considering constant or every-day stressors for students, what issue is more often cited than that of homework (Katz et al. 2012, Moë et al. 2020, OECD 2016)? My hope is that by breaking down a traditional element of instruction like homework we can identify the ways that such a controversial and long-questioned tradition contributes to academic stress and negative mental health outcomes for students. Therefore, my research focused on this question; how can various approaches to the practice of homework reduce negative mental health outcomes in elementary age students?

Statement of Problem

Homework has been a taken for granted practice in most classrooms for decades, but it has drawn much debate and controversy over its use more recently. Traditional wisdom from many teachers is often that constant practice is needed to keep concepts fresh in the mind of students, that students need to develop good working habits, and that homework can provide valuable formative assessment (Urauchi & Tanno 2022). On the other side of the issue, there have been arguments made from parents, students, and even other teachers on the downsides of the practice, citing it as a constant stressor for all parties involved, to the point that the relationships between each party can strain to a seriously detrimental degree (Katz. et al 2012).
When addressing a mental health crisis like the one facing our current generation of students, homework and its associated academic stress is a high stakes psychosocial domino; a stressor that when not properly addressed, may lead to flagging motivation, negative health outcomes due to chronic stress, and even school failure (Pascoe et al. 2020, Schraml et al. 2012). As future educators, we must learn how to handle this controversial yet ubiquitous practice with the extreme attention it deserves, to better serve a diverse population of learners.

**Justification of the Study**

I believe this work to be of utmost importance to the field of education. Homework is a near universal practice, most public schools have a quite standardized approach, and yet due to Covid-19 many of these practices were disrupted and then rapidly reassessed, a response often varying wildly between different districts and states. The incredibly concerning worsening condition of student mental health has a huge impact, not only academically or for health on an individual level, but for the system and society as a whole. It is an oft-reported phenomenon that one of the major generators of stress on a daily basis for students is stress resulting from homework (Katz et al. 2012, Moè et al. 2020, OECD 2016), an experience I and many others (especially those with preexisting psychiatric conditions) can attest to. There has been a great effort to address this strain, especially through the rapid adaptation required by the pandemic, but it is in no way consistent across districts and states or clearly focused on addressing the root problems of the practice.


REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to critically examine the role that homework plays in introducing stress to the social system of schooling. From the perspective of educators, families, program organizers, administrators, and most of all students, the role that stressors play in the dynamics of this social system is a constant concern, none more ubiquitous than the daily struggle with homework. The issue of assigning homework in elementary schools has generated a decades long debate about its effectiveness, consequences, and impact on school life for students, parents, and teachers alike. In an effort to remain neutral on its place in education, this review will rather focus on the underlying causes and effects of homework related stress and examine the factors that can seek to measure and ameliorate this stress. While the controversy around its place in education is inconclusive, we can seek better ways to interface with all sides of the social system of schooling to address the implications of homework through a thorough, research-based approach.

Rationale for Homework

While this review does not seek to take any one side on the debate around homework as a fundamental practice, it does seek to frame it properly as it is used by educators. Beginning, as many practicing educators would suggest, with the why or to what end; Why do we assign homework? According to data collected and analyzed by Urauchi and Tanno (2022), the amount
of homework assigned by elementary school teachers correlated with certain underlying beliefs about the practice. After the initial study was able to categorize and validate the construct of those beliefs (qualifying the responses into categories of child-centered, communicative, attention managing etc.), the amount of homework assigned correlated with beliefs about the importance of “habit formation” and “insight into and evaluation of learning”, but most strongly correlated with “promotion of learning”. These teachers are likely operating under assumptions that were ingrained from their own education, that they then reproduce in their own practice. The researchers concluded that “if teacher educators identify and acknowledge teachers' beliefs in homework, they may be able to more efficiently address issues related to the importance of that knowledge in class” (Urauchi & Tanno 2022, p. 9).

In a meta-analytic review of the mass of research on this topic, with a majority of the data coming from elementary level research, significant differences were seen in homework efficacy among grade levels, with researchers stating “… it may be concluded that homework works well in upper grade levels, such as 5-8 and 9 and above, rather than in lower grade levels such as 1-4.” (Baş et al. 2017, p. 40), with the lowest grade range measuring half the effectiveness of the higher ranges. One possible explanation for this phenomenon the researchers cite is an improvement in developmental domains as the student ages, including higher levels of awareness, responsibility, problem solving, critical thinking, attention, and concentration. In the same analysis, while a positive relationship did exist across all experiment types and levels between homework assigned and academic performance, the effect is considered weak (p. 44), and the researchers highlight other factors as potentially more influential on the relationship, like quality of tasks, duration as appropriate for developmental level, and the surrounding support
network for the students including parental help and teacher feedback in much the same way as Urauchi (2022), which held similar conclusions.

To support the idea of highly situational factors having a substantial relationship to homework efficacy, a study of gender and age differences in homework experiences found that companionship and location (where and with whom) had dramatic and varying effects between different age and gender groups (Kackar et al 2011). For example, even as average time spent on homework tasks increases uniformly while ascending in age, reported stress while doing homework was higher for girls at home while alone than for boys of similar ages, and lower than boys when doing homework with friends (p. 76). The conclusions we can draw from these highly variable effects of homework point to a contradiction; while the beliefs about homework’s utility by teachers is relatively uniform, in practice the experience of students is anything but. In regards to the outcomes teachers believe in, the relationship exists, but varies highly in regards to the particular student's age and several other factors. While that may make it difficult to gauge whether the practice has the intended effect, what we can more concretely measure and address is the other side of the coin, being the psychological effect on students.

**Homework as a Primary Stressor and its Effects**

According to a recent OECD survey (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 66% of students reported feeling significantly stressed about poor grades, among many other more specific indicators that researchers group together as academic-related stress (OECD 2016). The ongoing effects of this stress can be grouped into several categories including; detrimental for mental-wellbeing, increased likelihood of substance use, decreased ability to receive adequate amount of sleep, increased chance of poor physical health outcomes,
and finally poor academic outcomes including a higher chance of school failure (Pascoe et. al. 2020). These findings are corroborated by a longitudinal study on the immediate effects of chronic stress throughout a school year, combined with the objective measures gathered from academic data, in which students who reported perceiving high academic demands and who exhibited symptoms of chronic stress had significantly poorer academic performance by the end of one year (Schraml et al. 2012).

A valid way to evaluate and measure how homework can put stress on students is clearly necessary, as well as what factors can amplify or alleviate said stress. The “Stress around Homework” construct, as proposed by Katz et al. in their 2012 construct validation paper, offers a promising approach to addressing the issue. Through the lens of measuring correlating factors like self-efficacy, motivation, and the student-parent dynamic, researchers sought to better link homework-related stress to causes and effects in the educational social system. In a second accompanying study along with the validation of the construct, a comparison with expected differences in students with learning disabilities was also conducted. These studies were successful, in that they proved that homework stress could be measured to correlate in expected ways to self-efficacy and internal vs controlled motivation, both in the student and to a similar degree in the parents/guardians (Katz. et al 2012 p. 412) This construct, while still new, could help to clearly define how underlying factors contribute to homework related stress, as it pertains to academic stress as described above. With these tools, we as educators can clearly frame our understanding of the causes and effects of this phenomenon, and better evaluate the various solutions proposed in further literature.

**Perspectives on Alleviating Homework Stress**
A more recent perspective on an age-old explanation of the ‘homework problem’ is Zuzanek’s 2009 study on time allotment. Students in the study reported their feelings in real-time during tasks throughout the day, reporting twice as much stress and anxiety doing homework as they did in class, although Zuzanek focuses on the result that shows students reported “feeling challenged” at a much higher rate doing homework than in class as well. They conclude that teachers, unable to challenge students during the school day, offload that work to after school time. He ultimately closes by pointing towards what he described as a “societal time-management crisis”, where the school day left students hard choices when it came to selecting homework over other activities, and left parents too pressed from their work day to support them (p. 114). While this perspective is interesting in its methodology, it is ultimately representative of a more passive response to the issue. Zuzanek, in blaming society’s broad inability to efficiently allocate time, simply gestures at wider systemic issues rather than giving concrete, implementable solutions.

A foundational report on a more modern and intensive set of approaches can be found in Margolis (2005), in which the author categorizes the most promising approaches identified to alleviate homework stress. This means an active pursuit of parent/guardian engagement, after-school group involvement, and administrative moderation. Margholis gives specific strategies for collaboration with individual parents of struggling learners, such as developing support plans and specific support tasks, and even limiting homework time. The study positions homework management as an adaptive process, with the teacher collaborating with all actors in the system to produce the best results.

Further refining this social support-system approach, a recent study by Moè et al. (2020) sought to reduce homework stress through an intervention program with parents and guardians to
increase the adoption of ‘needs supportive practices’, or practices that satisfy the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness for both the student and parent while completing homework. “Need supportive practices consist of a range of behaviors such as showing understanding, taking the child's perspective, fostering choice, competence and a sense of volition (such as displaying patience, providing a rationale, not being intrusive), whereas need thwarting practices consist of behaviors which prevent children from taking the initiative, experiencing competence and a supportive relationships, such as yelling, inducing guilt, threatening or punishing, setting rules without allowing the child to reflect on its meaning” (p. 1.2) The study found that not only did needs thwarting practices heavily transfer to student homework stress, but they were often born from a frustration of needs on the parents' part, as their competence in helping their child was threatened by lack of education, resources, or understanding of the problem. Both student and parent groups reported a reduction in homework stress after a brief informational intervention program, in which they were coached on implementing these positive practices. This study, when paired with ideas from Margolis (2005), provides a framework for intervening at both the student, parent, and teacher level to reduce the negative practices that lead to homework stress, a domino that could significantly reduce academic-related stress and the slough of negative outcomes associated with it.

METHODOLOGY

This section will explain the methodology of this inquiry, including my own positionality, the theoretical framework of the analysis, and a review of an interview conducted with an educator in the community. My own history and perspective on the issue is important to my
goals for the inquiry, as it has shaped how I’ve conducted my research from the beginning. The same can be said for the theoretical lens of Activity theory, which has influenced what studies and what specific aspects of those studies have stood out to me the most. Finally, my community partner was very helpful, providing a boots-on-the-ground perspective as a teacher with recent experience rethinking the practice.

**Positionality**

My position on the issue of homework and how it relates to student stress has been shaped by my experience as a struggling student, as well as my observations of elementary school practices today. I have struggled with completing regular assignments my entire academic career, dating all the way back to my earliest experiences in elementary education, where I would regularly have to stay behind at recess to complete missing assignments. I attribute this struggle both to the average difficulties of a child in the modern era, as well as my ADHD, which went undiagnosed until just last year. My inability to pay attention was recognized at these early ages, but wasn’t coupled with stereotypical hyperactive behavior, and was rather attributed to boredom with the material. I was placed in the gifted program, where the fast pace of the material could more easily keep my interest, but which exacerbated my problem with completing homework. The resulting frustration caused a substantial strain on my relationship with my parents, teachers, and even my own self-image. Since then, homework has remained the most consistently stressful aspect of school for me, even leading to my own brush with school failure in my first attempt at college. While only a portion of students may have similar struggles with mental illness, most students I interacted with during my observations at local elementary schools reported at least mild to moderate stress on a daily basis related to homework, and I actually observed a similar effect on my cooperating teacher. The amount of work being turned in on a weekly basis was
high, and they reported grading homework and other assignments as their biggest time commitment weekly, creating a bottleneck that affected other aspects of the classroom. I could tell that homework was putting a good deal of stress on all parties involved, which combined with its consistency, would negatively impact the mental wellbeing of students, parents, and teachers alike. Both my personal struggles and history, combined with these observations, made me want to research alternative techniques and perspectives on homework.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework I found to be most helpful in examining the issue is Activity Theory. First established by refining the criticism of Behavior Theory originating in the Russian School of Psychology with Vygotsky, Leont’ev and later the Scandinavian school of AT would refine this thinking to describe the intertwined internal and external mechanisms of human activity and the extent to which social and traditional constructs can influence the manner of thinking and therefor action of human subjects (Roth 2007). This framework is especially pertinent to this inquiry, as the theory starts by examining a particular activity, in this case homework, and identifies a surrounding matrix of culturally constructed “artifacts”, in this case our cultural practices regarding homework such as what tools are available and how labor is divided amongst participating parties. Often studies such as Katz et al. (2012) and Margolis (2005) must contend with the surrounding social systems and internal mental systems of the activity of homework, and thus seek to form a connection between the individual subject and social reality in accordance with the theory. It has been very helpful to my understanding of these studies to classify whether the researchers identify a strain that relates to divisions of labor, such as the role parents and teachers play in stress-reducing techniques, or even if there is a an
object-outcome disconnect, such as the confusion about whether academic success or the
homework as a product itself is the outcome of the activity.

Community Partner Interview

To help gain insight on the issue of homework and its effects on student mental health, I
carried out an interview with Mrs. Williams (pseudonym), a current 5th grade teacher with a
decade of experience in education. Being neither a senior member of staff, nor a new hire, I was
confident that she could offer a balanced perspective on an issue. Additionally, we had struck up
a conversation on the topic after I taught a lesson to some of her students as part of a project, and
she expressed that the district and her grade team had recently undergone a lot of change in the
area. Framing the recent changes around concerns resulting from the pandemic, and indicating
that it could be part of a broader trend in the space, I knew there was a great opportunity to
deepen the understanding already provided by the literature.

Firstly, I wanted to ask a similar question to Urauchi (2022), and find out what they as an
educator believed to be the purpose of homework. The answer was very illuminating, as it
pointed to a mindset shift we may be seeing as the importance of homework is deemphasised.
Mrs. Williams stated that homework is most beneficial to students who need extra practice or
support with certain concepts, and not as a consequence for behavioral issues or as "filler"
content. She believes it’s role should be limited, that homework in late elementary is mainly to
help establish time-allocation habits that will benefit students in secondary education. This
philosophy matches the direction the district is moving as well as the attitudes of many of her colleagues, as homework policy in Mrs. Williams 5th grade team has been simplified to only a handful of consistent items, supplemented only by work not completed in class. She explains that while it makes sense to extend the opportunity to master a concept to a struggling student with time outside the classroom, it does not make sense to “punish” students who have already achieved proficiency or who use their class time wisely. With the exception of daily reading quotas, once mastery is demonstrated in the target areas (e.g. naming all 50 states, completing multiplication tables), that out-of-class obligation goes away.

With these new practices in place, Mrs. Williams hasn’t observed much stress on the part of the students. Rather, she identifies parents as the main source of complaints about homework, and the ones who seem the most stressed. Some complaints echo the common refrains from students, that the tasks seem pointless or they conflict with extracurricular activities, while others are specific frustrations around involvement, such as a lack of background knowledge or a dismissal of common core techniques. This is one of the major takeaways she emphasized in the interview, that parent communication is key. She recommended that communication with parents be a top priority for new teachers, with expectations being laid out clearly at the beginning of the year, ample opportunity for questions and support, and enough time after their student is given an assignment to ask questions or get further instruction if needed.

While the interview did not address all aspects of my problem of practice, I believe this information is still very helpful in understanding the current trends and ideas that may be circulating in school districts today, as well as the perspectives of the teachers who push for and ultimately implement these changes. While this may not be a universally held philosophy, hearing that a deemphasized and more personalized approach is being taken on a broader scale
than in single classrooms has many implications for how research has affected and will affect engaging with homework and academic stress in the future.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, I will seek to synthesize the responses from my community partner interview and my analysis of the literature under the lens of my theoretical framework to produce several concrete findings.

Discussion of Findings

Although homework is a longstanding practice, it is clearly not without valid criticisms from many angles. While teachers hold relatively consistent views about the purpose of homework as a tool to promote learning (Urauchi 2022), the benefits of homework are inconsistent between different populations of students (Baş et al. 2017; Kackar et al. 2011; O'Sullivan et al. 2014), and can lead to harmful effects on student mental health (Katz et al 2012). We can group the findings from the review of this literature, and conclusions drawn from the methodology of the inquiry, into two categories; that a change in homework rationale and application would be beneficial to students mental health, and that when homework is warranted, there are techniques that can reduce its negative impact on students’ mental health.

Finding One: Homework May Have a Counterproductive Academic Effect

As the literature shows, the intended effect of homework and its actual effects have a fundamental disconnect. While we seek to increase academic achievement through homework,
the actual experiences of students of different ages, genders, and socioeconomic status can vary greatly, and the added academic stress can lead to adverse academic outcomes. This stress is felt by not only the subject of the activity, i.e. the student, but the surrounding social system including the teacher and parents as well. Some scholars will point to homework as the object needing to change, such as Baş et al. (2017) highlighting assignment quality as a major deciding factor in efficacy, or rather pointing to a flaw in the tools at a students’ disposal such as Zuzanek (2009) blaming poor time management. However, it is not the surrounding cultural artifacts but rather the intended outcome of the practice that needs examination. As discussed in my community partner interview, a move to deemphasize homework and to rather reclassify the practice as a tool used only in specific circumstances to achieve specific goals, may reduce stress greatly on the part of the student. Furthermore, as the effect of homework on academics is weaker in early grades, it can be more easily scaled back so as to be developmentally appropriate (Baş et al. 2017). Through a thorough examination of the rationale for homework, educators can seek to create more developmentally appropriate curriculums, and seek appropriate outcomes other than an adherence to tradition that harms students.

Finding Two: The Negative Effects of Homework Stress can be Addressed Communally

While many are often tempted by this reappraisal to discard the practice entirely, as discussed by my community partner there are still many valid ways the practice is used, such as daily reading time, or to extend the opportunity to build proficiency for struggling students. In these cases, the literature bears out that the entire social network of the student is needed to address the drawbacks of homework. In other words, the problem with the activity can be addressed from a community and division of labor approach. It is the job of the educator, as facilitator of the activity, to mediate these solutions, starting with accepting the extra effort of
adaptive practice. Techniques such as adjusting workload and difficulty to a struggling learners needs, engaging the learner through connecting assignments to real world experiences or goals, and helping to foster study skills and social support systems amongst peers, are examples of labor that is part of the homework activity that can be redistributed toward the educator and off of the students shoulders, and are proven to help immensely (Margolis, 2005). Similarly, we can address the stress felt in the parent-student relationship, and by extension how parents react to these assignments. Using a communicative practice as a base, as suggested by my community partner, we can seek to inform parents about how to best to support their student, whether through constructing support plans or by simply emphasizing needs-supportive techniques such as not impeding negative affect and presenting rationale rather than shaming or using imperatives. We cannot ignore, however, that not all students have access to help from their parents, and while communicating to low SES parents that their contribution matters greatly to their child's success (O'Sullivan et al., 2014), use of homework may have to adapt to the resources available to the student. More than anything, if all parties can count on each-other as a resource rather than a competitor in this process, there are many ways to make homework a less stressful process. As recommended by my community partner, we must give ample opportunity to answer questions and provide support, and be prepared to adapt our own practice as needed.

CONCLUSION

In this section, I will summarize my exploration of the problem of homework related stress and its impacts on student mental health, as well as the framework, methodology, and results of this inquiry. I will then present the implications of the findings, and recommendations for educators.
Conclusion

In the interest of helping to alleviate the increasing issue of student mental health, reappraising traditional educational techniques like homework is essential. Through examining the practice from the ground up, from its rationale to its effects on various populations of students, we can see that there is a disconnect between the goal of academic improvement and the detrimental effects of stress introduced to the social system of the student. This contradiction can be addressed from two fronts, in the framework of Activity Theory we must examine the intended outcome of the activity, and the cultural artifacts at the disposal of the student. According to data collected from the community interview method of this inquiry, this means carefully examining the rationale for homework, relegating its use to developmentally appropriate contexts and towards specific academic demands that cannot be met in the classroom. When it is warranted, the literature supports addressing the problems endemic to its use from a community and labor-dividing perspective; implementing techniques to reduce stress placed on the students, parents, and teachers alike through an adaptive approach to the needs of struggling students.

Implications and Recommendations

The implications of this inquiry point to a need for both individual teachers and districts as a whole to reexamine how homework is used in elementary education. Individual teachers can evaluate if every assignment out of class justifies the added strain, and if so, what techniques and policies can be put into place to reduce the negative impact on students. Familiarizing yourself with adaptive techniques, community-based solutions, and needs-supporting intervention language as described in the literature, can all be tools in the belts of educators. Advocacy for
wider change should also be a priority, because as brought up by my community partner, secondary education will need to examine their own homework practices before homework can truly be responsibly reduced to its optimal amount at the primary level. While following the research surrounding homework can feel complicated, and often contradictory, all we can do as educators is stay informed and adaptable, putting the needs of our students first over our own adherence to tradition.
References


Transcript of Community Partner Interview: Mrs. Williams (Pseudonym), 5th Grade Teacher

1. What do you personally believe to be the purpose of homework?

I think homework can be beneficial to students who need extra practice or support. However, students who are able to manage class time appropriately should not (in my opinion) be punished with extra work at home just because some of their classmates do not use their time wisely. That being said, I do think it is important for elementary students to have some sort of homework assigned so they can get in the routine of allocating time after school to get work done as middle and high school has lots of homework and after school activities, they will need to make time for. Learning to be responsible with time management should be the primary reason for assigning homework. For instance, in 5th grade at Rosedale we assign 30 minutes of reading in Spanish each day, along with 30 minutes of reading in English (1 hour total), multiplication practice and learning the 50 states. Once students ace their multiplication tables and 50 states they no longer have to do those at home. The reading is assigned daily, the whole year, as reading is imperative to academic success across the board.

2. Have you observed the effects of homework related stress in your students?

Since students have had homework assigned since 1st grade, I have not noticed much stress on student behalf. Honestly, the ones who seem the most stressed are the parents. Some because they see it to be pointless, others because it can infringe on extracurricular activities, but most because
they do not have the background knowledge to help their children with homework related questions, so they get frustrated.

3. Have you ever implemented any homework policy you would consider outside of the norm, and if so, what have been your observations on its effects?

The 5th grade team follows district guidelines when assigning homework. As the district is trying to move away from so much homework being assigned at the elementary level, we have chosen the assignments stated in number 2 as our policy. We feel it helps to create some sense of routine, while giving the "gift" of less work to those students who learn their multiplication tables and 50 states. Those who do not, are not punished, but instead are asked to use time at home to practice skills they are lacking.

4. How do you think the students' social network (friends, parents, other supervising adults) plays into their interaction with homework?

Parents seem to be the ones with the most complaints. A large part is due to common core methods and how differently they learned to do things compared to how their kids do things currently. Most parents want to be involved or help with homework yet feel frustrated when they don't understand what their child is learning, or the strategies being used.

5. Do you observe a change in how homework is being perceived on a wide scale by your colleagues, administrators, or parents?
Most colleagues find homework to be tedious and difficult to grade as we never really know if it was done independently or not. Also, for some students it seems redundant to send home more work on skills they have already mastered. Basically, it's seen as helpful when it's a student who needs extra help doing the work, but quite the opposite when it is being completed by a student working at, or above grade level.

6. What, in your opinion, could future educators do to mitigate adverse psychological effects of academic stress, and what role does homework play in that management?

Most work seems stressful when it's not explained properly, or instructions are not given. Homework should be a time to finish classwork that was not completed at school or to reinforce skills that have not been mastered. It should NOT be seen or used as a consequence for behavior issues, punitive reasons or as a "filler". Assignments should be meaningful, well explained and easy to access. Also, communication with parents is key. Lay out the expectations early in the year so they know what is expected, allow for questions to be asked and provide support if and when needed. Like I stated previously, most parents want to help but they just might not know how. So, if the work being assigned needs instructions, make sure they are provided or at the very least, that parents have a way (and enough time) to contact the teacher for assistance.