



NO Summer homework sounds like a good idea—until you see how miserable a child looks as he slogs through that pile of book reports, math packets, and journal entries. The summer workload has grown significantly in recent years. But a little hard work never hurt anyone, right? Well, in this case, it might.

Schools should rethink summer homework, and not just because it stresses out students (and parents). The truth is, homework doesn't accomplish what we assume it does. Research shows there's

only a moderate correlation between homework and standardized test scores or long-term achievement in middle school. And research indicates that, even in high school, too much homework can be counterproductive.

Some studies claim that students lose skills if they don't practice them over the summer. But if a child can't regain his grasp of fractions with a brief review, maybe those skills weren't taught well enough in the first place. Doing a mountain of math sheets without a teacher's help—and perhaps incorrectly— isn't the answer.

Summer homework affects how kids feel about learning and school.

But there are a few things summer homework does accomplish effectively: It steals time away from other important aspects of learning, such as play, which helps young people master social skills and teamwork. In addition, writing book reports means fewer hours being

physically active, which is essential for good health and weight control, not to mention proper brain development.

I'm hugely in favor of students reading over the summer, but asking them to plow through a long required-reading list turns an activity that should be fun

into a dreaded chore.

Perhaps worst of all, summer homework affects how students feel about learning and school. Summer is a critical time for them to relax and pursue their interests. Nobody wants to spend that time with a long to-do list hanging over them. Do we want our children to start the year refreshed and ready to learn? Or burned out and resentful? It's something every teacher should carefully consider. •

—NANCY KALISH

Co-author, *The Case Against Homework*