



Term 3 2018

## Embrace Equip Engage Empower

**Included in this issue:**

**Page 1**

**Homework Policy**



**Page 3**

**Making Thinking Visible**



The Learning Quarterly (LQ) is published during Fallow Week each term. The purpose is to highlight and explore current practices in education within the St Kieran's context. It is one of the many ways we keep you engaged in your child's learning.

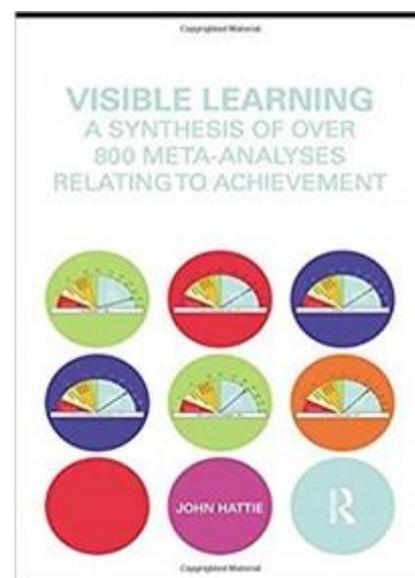
### Homework Policy

During this second half of the year, the school is reviewing the current homework policy that has been in place since 2010. The recent parent survey conducted by the school on homework gave a very wide range of opinions and experiences by many families. In light of the responses, the learning undertaken by the teaching staff and reviewing current research, the school will revise our current policy and present an updated set of guidelines to the community in Term 4.

The value of homework has been the subject of much debate over the years. As with most controversial topics, there are strong opinions on homework, many of which are based on people's own school experiences or the experiences of their children. Our aim is to recognise these responses, but to focus on what reliable and valid research data tells us. This should enable us to present findings that give a balanced reflection on homework.

The first analysis of homework comes from Professor John Hattie from the University of Melbourne. He has synthesised over 800 studies into school achievement, ranking the effect of practices by the school, teacher, home and student. Homework was one of these many studies. Out of the 138 influences he analysed, homework ranked 88. His study concluded that homework did have a positive effect on student achievement but that its effect was considered minimal for primary aged students. It had a greater effect for high school students. You can read and hear more about John Hattie through this [LINK](#).

The other significant body of research was done in 2013 by Mike Horsley and Richard Walker in their book *Reforming Homework: Practices, Learning and Policy*. Their research revolved around three main issues:

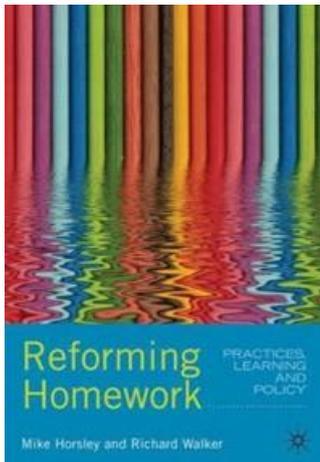


1. Is homework beneficial for student outcomes?
2. Does homework help to develop the skills of independent, self-directed learning in students?
3. Is parents' involvement in their children's homework activities beneficial for achievement, motivation and development of independent learning skills?

The answers to these three issues are complex and involve many qualifications, too detailed to explore here but are good guiding questions in the review of homework. In *Reforming Homework*, the academics comment on the differing conclusions reached by the studies. Researchers have variously concluded that homework is beneficial (Cooper et al.) or harmful (various), that homework has no effects (Kohn), that it has complex effects or that the research is too sparse or too problematic to be able to justify the drawing of strong conclusions. However, the areas of independence and self-directed learning are ones that we see as worthy of further research.

When teachers are asked *why* they give homework, they usually give the following reasons:

- Homework allows the students to consolidate understandings and skills.
- Homework develops the students' ability to learn the organisational skills of managing their time/resources etc.



As a teaching staff, there are many benefits in homework that we see for our students. In particular, it is beneficial for older students in developing positive attitudes to study habits and time management. This is vital for student achievement in high school.

Supporters of homework agree that there are not only academic benefits, but that students are supported to develop important study and time management skills and parents have a chance to engage in their child's learning.

On the other side of the debate lie strong reasons for not having homework. Those opposed to homework believe that it creates unwarranted pressure on students for limited or questionable academic benefit; it deprives children of time to develop other life skills i.e. through recreational and artistic activities or social interaction and it places unnecessary pressure on family life.

The challenge lies in finding an approach that works best for an individual student and indeed for different families and particular situations. Before we finalise our policy, we will be looking further into these questions within the St Kieran's context. We will not be doing away with homework but we will look at how homework can become more manageable for busy families and review the quality, quantity and variety of homework given.

**Here are some further links to articles or sound clips on the homework debate.**

A discussion on the value of homework with Associate Prof Richard Walker from Sydney University, author of the book: *Reforming Homework*. Download the audio just under the heading at the top of the page:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/homework/4421958>

John Hattie weighs in on the debate. Discussion about parental involvement and its effect on determining the impact of homework:

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10641944](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10641944)

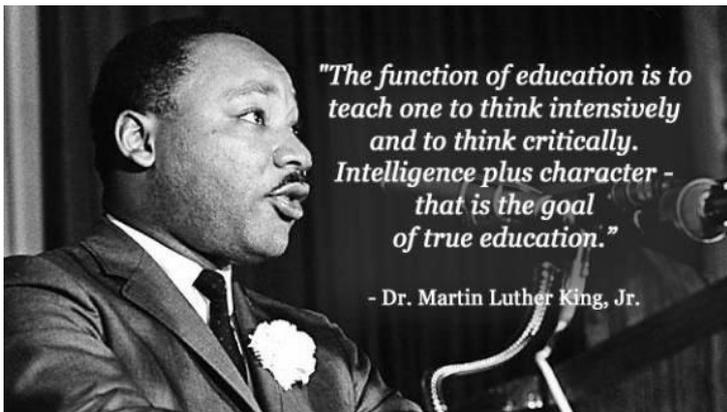
An article from ACER that responds to a study undertaken in Victoria. Mainly around homework in high schools, but also highlights important findings about primary school:

<http://teacher.acer.edu.au/article/does-homework-contribute-to-student-success>

This is a brief summary of research from US and Europe addressing both sides of the case. Recommendations are made in light of the summaries. It outlines the common theme that it is quality not quantity of homework that has the greatest impact:

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/The-Case-For-and-Against-Homework.aspx>

## Making Thinking Visible



Last Monday staff participated in Professional Learning which explored ways in which we can encourage students to think more deeply about their learning. Making thinking visible for our learners attempts to put deep thinking and thinking about our thinking at the centre of all learning.

Learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to move beyond memorisation and completing the set work towards building understanding and routines for exploring, organising and synthesising ideas. It means moving

from the task orientated -“I’m finished Miss” attitude to the learning orientated -“I’ve learnt .....” attitude. Students are encouraged to think about the way they are thinking, known as metacognition, as teachers make the ways in which students learn visible.

You may have heard your children talk about ‘Thinking Routines’. These are high yield learning activities that encourage children to question, listen carefully, document, explore, organise, justify, argue their case, synthesis and apply ideas as they dig deeper into concepts. Hand in hand with these thinking routines is the nurturing of the classroom and school thinking culture. A culture that provides students with rich learning **opportunities** in an **environment** where thinking is valued. A culture which used a **language** related to thinking, where teachers and other students **model** thinking through **routines** and **interactions**. A culture where the **expectation** is to learn by thinking and expressing concepts. A culture where **time** is allocated for students to actively think hard.

Mrs Kerrie Wetzlar. Religious Education Coordinator

