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***“There’s serious doubt about whether homework has any benefit at all.”***

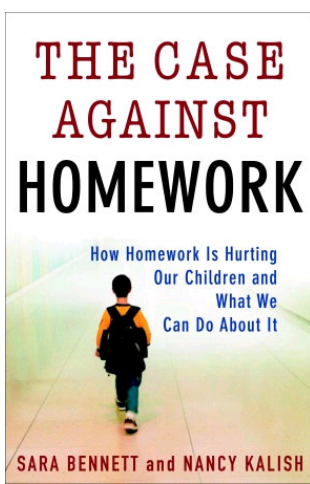
- Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish, *New York Times* Op-Ed, June 19, 2006

# **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK**

**HOW HOMEWORK IS HURTING OUR CHILDREN AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT**

BY

**SARA BENNETT AND NANCY KALISH**



It’s the start of another school year. And for many children and their parents, that means the start of another year of too much homework—and all the stress, family strife, dread, and despair that often comes with it. Many of us accept the fact that it’s our job to beg, nag, and force our kids to do their assignments. We assume that homework is an extremely valuable part of the learning process, that it’s well-designed and thoughtfully assigned, and so it’s worth all the arguments and tears, as well as lost play and family time.

But what if it’s not?

In **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK (Crown, September 2006, \$24.95 hardcover)**, Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish offer overwhelming

evidence, backed by extensive research, that homework has few proven benefits for kids of any age and that teachers are almost never trained in how much to assign or what makes an assignment valuable. In fact, there’s not a teacher education program in the country that offers a stand-alone course on homework. Bennett and Kalish make an airtight case that more homework isn’t always better. It can lead to student burnout and actually hamper learning and development. Replacing play with hours of nightly work has created a nation of homework potatoes who are inactive and sleep deprived.

Rigorously researched, **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK** brings all this insanity into the spotlight and finally provides a comprehensive cure for frustrated parents. Bennett and Kalish have not only gathered the evidence from dozens of studies, but also interviewed hundreds of top experts, teachers, parents, and kids about what’s wrong with the system and how to change it. In addition, Sara Bennett has personally crusaded for change in her own school and achieved major homework reforms. Bennett and Kalish put common homework assignments under the microscope to analyze which promote learning and which are pure busywork. Readers will be shocked to learn that many nightly assignments get a failing grade. So what’s a parent to do? Whether you want immediate relief from an assignment that’s keeping your child up way past bedtime or what to do to change things for good, **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK** provides a game plan. Bennett and Kalish give parents dozens of sample emails, dialogues, and strategies for handling teacher meetings that will help get out-of-control homework under control.

Parents need **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK** more than ever. According to a national study of more than 2,900 children done by the University of Michigan in 2004, the time kids spend

doing homework has skyrocketed by 51 percent since 1981. For some kids, this adds mere minutes. But for many, it means hours more at their desks. To top it off, studies show that elementary school kids who study hours every night do no better on standardized tests than their peers who do no homework at all.

**THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK** exposes other eye-opening facts, such as:

- ✓ Most assignments flunk the test of what top educators actually believe constitutes meaningful, worthwhile homework.
- ✓ Many countries with the highest scoring students on achievement tests have teachers who assign little homework.
- ✓ According to studies, there is almost no correlation between homework and academic achievement in elementary school and only a moderate correlation in middle school. Even in high school, any benefits start to decline after kids reach a maximum of two hours of work each night. And they will get nothing out of it if the homework is pure busywork.
- ✓ Some researchers recommend no more than 10 minutes per night per grade level (10 minutes for a first grader, 30 for a third grader, and so on)—and others recommend none. But according to a brand new 2006 AP-AOL poll, many kids in grades K through 8 are working far more than the recommended amounts each night.
- ✓ Obesity, sleeplessness, and depression are at the highest levels recorded in children.

Like most parents, Bennett and Kalish want their children to be happy, to love learning, and to be competitive in a highly competitive world. But is a ton of homework really the answer? Parents who despair when their child is asked to create a replica of the Pentagon out of popsicle sticks will discover that they are not alone. Packed with the voices of real parents, teachers, and kids, **THE CASE AGAINST HOMEWORK** will end the isolation that parents feel as they go through the nightly struggle. More important, it will empower them to advocate for change in their own schools so that they can reclaim evenings as family time and restore a healthy balance to their children's lives.

### **About the Authors**

**SARA BENNETT** worked until 2004 as a criminal defense appeals attorney and was the first director of the Wrongful Convictions Project of New York City's Legal Aid Society. She is an expert in the post-conviction representation of battered women and the wrongly convicted, and has lectured at Columbia University Law School and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Sara and her cases have been featured in the *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *60 Minutes II*, *Dateline NBC*, *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*. She successfully challenged and changed homework policies at her children's schools. **NANCY KALISH** is a former senior editor at *Child* and *Cosmopolitan*, has been a columnist for both *Redbook* and *Working Mother*, and is the current "Healthy Families" columnist at *Selecciones*, the Spanish-language edition of *Reader's Digest*. She has written hundreds of articles for *Parenting*, *Parents*, *Real Simple*, *Reader's Digest*, *More*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Glamour*, *Self*, *Health*, *Prevention*, and other magazines. She is also a former adjunct professor at NYU's Graduate School of Journalism. During the writing of this book, Nancy put several of the strategies to work for her own daughter, always with surprisingly successful results. Both authors live in Brooklyn, New York.

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