

### ***Civic Minds***

**Date:** Friday, November 6, 2015

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**Article Title:** *More kids, parents say 'no' to homework*

**Section:** Main, A4

### **Vocabulary:**

Look up the definition of ***jettisoned***. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

"But now, not only have other schools in her district ***jettisoned*** the work sheets, a middle-school principal also thanked her for sending him devoted readers."

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. Amy Clipston had a request that was a new one for her daughter's first-grade teacher. What did she request?
2. Her request, which the teacher approved, represented one small step for a movement slowly gaining momentum in U.S. schools. What is this movement all about?
3. A growing legion of critics say the notion that America can close the learning gap with China or India by stuffing kids' backpacks with math work sheets as early as kindergarten is backfiring. How?
4. Some school administrators are starting to listen. What are some districts around Philadelphia, New Jersey & Maryland doing to support this change in philosophy?
5. The anecdotal complaints from parents and teachers about the harmful impact of students emailing completed assignments at 3 a.m. or kids spending sunny weekend days inside on a laptop are increasingly supported by scientific research. What did the 2013 American Psychological Association survey find?
6. While high-schoolers are expected to hit the books every night, Stephanie Brant, the Gaithersburg principal, said she was surprised when she initially got pushback from some parents when she eliminated homework. What were the parents worried about?
7. What's more, he and Abeles argue, too much homework can cause considerable harm. How?

### **Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts:**

- When did you start getting homework in school?
- At what point, did homework become "too" much for you? If it's always been manageable, how do you balance school and other after-school activities?
- Is a moderate amount of homework good for students? Why or why not?
- Do you think more parents, teachers and districts will opt out of homework? Why or why not?
- Has homework ever stressed you out?

***That is all music to the ears of Vicki Abeles, who triggered widespread debate on test and homework pressure with her 2010 documentary "Race to Nowhere," and is back with another film and book, "Beyond Measure," to look at schools that are breaking the mold. She said educators should seek work life balance for students just as some companies are doing for employees.***

***"A lot has been written about adults having real time off from the workday, and that it improves creativity and productivity," Abeles said. "We're doing the exact opposite with kids. It's insanity."***

- Why isn't there a greater emphasis on work life balance for students?

***Many schools try to stick to 10 minutes for each grade level, but some, particularly private ones, load on a lot more. For example, St. Joseph School in Downingtown, Pa., has a policy of starting with 30 minutes for first and second grade up to 120 minutes for seventh and eighth grade.***

- What is the homework policy at your school? Does it vary between subjects and teachers? How?

***Abeles said it's the stress on kids that concerns her the most. She said she was inspired to launch "Race to Nowhere" after school pressures were blamed for the suicide of a 13-year-old California girl. Abeles noted that she opted her son out of homework in elementary and middle school, and now he's doing well with his high school assignments.***

***"How many hours a day can they be spending on academics?" Abeles asked. "They need to develop in other ways. They need time with families and friends. They need time to do nothing."***

- What is your response to the above quote?

### **Essay**

***Why do you think there's such a large emphasis on homework in the American educational system? Is it working? Why or why not?***

### **Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy**

***How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.***

- Using The Seattle Times e-edition, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that "view" similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

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