**All Work, No Play**

Homework is Destroying Barlow’s Finest

Thirty minutes of homework a night times seven classes equals 210 minutes or three and a half hours just for homework. Eight and a half hours of school (including travel time), three hours of cheer. That's fifteen hours out of 24, leaving nine hours for sleep. I spend my entire day going to school, doing homework, cheering, and sleeping, and that's only when things go on schedule. I haven’t time for family, work or relaxing after a hard day at school. With the amount of homework teachers give, I don't even have time for the recommended 9.5 hours of sleep (Sleep In Adolescents). Clearly, we have too much homework.

Teachers think homework helps recap what you did in class, but often it doesn’t. When students are trying to get work done at 11:00, they aren’t trying to understand it, they're just trying to get it done; therefore they are tempted to cheat. Even if they are not “cheating” they are doing homework as quickly as possible, completing only the minimum. In [Bethesda, Maryland, Walt Whitman High School,](http://www.blackandwhiteonline.net/DesktopModules/Articles/Articles_Detail.aspx?x=WXHyHI6VMpA8m1ms%2BNa%2BpbWUKz8FxEefaGN1efwqyvXLq2LjV66B5gsFQ2FHRDdZ%2F1h1fq8hxUpZpFypnr5dvg%3D%3D) 95% of students admitted to copying homework because they didn’t have time to do it (Does Homework Really Work?). Kids are so busy completing homework assignments that they don’t have time to study for tests; since tests are always weighed heavily so they often cheat. A Harvard newspaper survey on incoming freshman found “[42 percent [admitted] to cheating](http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/9/5/freshman-survey-academics-extracurriculars/?page=single) on a homework assignment or a problem set” (Cox).

Both the National Education Association and the PTA argue for the ten-minute rule suggested by researcher and Duke professor Harris Cooper: a maximum of ten minutes of homework for each grade. By this standard, first graders would have 10 minutes and seniors in high school would have no more than two hours. "The 10 minute rule makes so much sense," Sandy Hook Principal Dr. Kathleen Gombos agreed. “It allows students to have the appropriate amount of homework for their developmental age. Learning comes from many places, not just our school work.”

Obviously Joel Barlow doesn't believe in this rule considering teachers think it is okay to give out four hours of homework a night. The ten-minute rule makes sense. Two hours of homework approximately 20 minutes per class can be doable for a high school senior. After 20 minutes we should be allowed to stop. Unfortunately we get penalized with zeros and detentions for not being able to complete homework assignments in time. Dr. Gombos continued, “Joel Barlow teachers appear to be unaware of what each other is doing. Multiple teachers give hours of homework, resulting in a situation that is too stressful for kids.”

Finland schools have recently become more successful because they have cut down on the homework. Kids are not as stressed about work they need to complete at night and have time to get a full 9.5 hours rest. The average load on juniors in high school in Finland “is about half what it is in the United States” according to Pasi Sahlberg in “Why Finland's Schools Are Top-Notch.” Finland 15-year-olds scored best in the science part of the Program for International Student Assessment out of 52 developed countries. Finland students have the opportunity to focus in school because they are well rested.

One way to fix this homework problem is moving to a block schedule. Many schools, including Fairfield Warde and Fairfield Ludlowe have switched over. They have 85-minute classes, four classes a day and don’t get as much homework. Sarah Gombos, freshman at Fairfield Warde, said, “It’s nice because you can actually get stuff done in class and we don’t have every subject for homework every night. ” Colorado College has changed their schedule to students having one class for three and a half weeks then they move on to a new class. Kids aren’t jumping from one class to another at night. They have less homework because they have more time with the teachers and they are able to study a subject in depth, instead of scratching the surface on many subjects. What homework they have is focused and meaningful.

What is the point of doing 25 math questions when you do the exact same thing every time? That is a waste of my time and energy. Yes, practicing is good, but unnecessary practice is wasteful, time consuming and stupid. I understood the topic after 10 problems; what’s the point of the next 15?

Joel Barlow High School junior, Angela Socci said she spends more time doing homework than with her family. Is it really healthy to spend more time studying than talking with your family? Family time is critical for teenagers. According to Barbara Bronson Gray, in "Teens Benefit From Spending Time with Parents," students who spend more time with their families see a rise in "self-esteem and social confidence." It is not healthy for teenagers to be locked in their bedrooms doing homework for hours.

We should have less than two hours of homework a night. We should stand by the ten-minute rule.  Joel Barlow High School should let us get the sleep we need, let us talk to our families and do things we need to do besides homework.

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