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# AERA SSRL SIG Times Magazine

September 2019  
Volume 2, Issue 7

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Editor-in-Chief  
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## Homework and Self-Regulated Learning: Reflections on Bempechat's Article, *The Case for (Quality) Homework:* *Why It Improves Learning, and How Parents Can Help* Guest Editor: Ms. Michelle A. Gnoleba Séki

Robert A. Reidel

**Self-Efficacy / Delay of Gratification**

**Explanation of Cartoon:** 1. In the first box, the student is confronted by his teacher who recognizes the student has low self-efficacy because she believes she will go to summer school no matter what. 2. In the second box, the teacher gives the student another chance to postpone immediate available opportunities to achieve academic rewards. The teacher uses kindness, empathy and patience in dealing with the student. 3. In the third box, the student remembers the teacher's kind words and disregards her friends, showing gradual self-discipline. 4. In the fourth box, the teacher builds up the students self-efficacy and motivation to continue with the academic exercises. 5. In the fifth box, the student hands in another cartoon and the teacher expresses happiness, which in turn, makes the student feel good. 6. In the sixth box, the student's family is so happy with the phone call from the teacher. The student learned to delay gratification and develop high self-efficacy through hard work and continuous support from the teacher and family.

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## Introduction to the Special Issue on Homework: Reflections on Bempechat's Article, "The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning, and How Parents Can Help"

**Ms. Michelle A. Gnoleba Séki**

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**J**anine Bempechat's article, *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning, and How Parents Can Help*, provided a detailed review regarding the implications of homework and how it may translate into a means of self-regulatory skills for students. Bempechat discussed the role of parents and how they can contribute in this regard. Those who contributed by writing a reflection had different perspectives regarding the article. Some contributors focused on the quality of homework assignments, while others focused on creating more engaging homework opportunities.

As an educator who places an emphasis on institutional accountability, I believe that an educational institution should create environments that promote student success. Institutions that have placed an emphasis on institutional accountability have seen positive changes in student achievement, retention, and overall student success (Bensimon, 2012). I also believe that this can be translated to the K-12 setting. Ensuring the students are provided with homework that solidify course objectives will set the platform for student growth. The intentionality in providing developmentally stimulating homework assignments takes time, effort, and persistence.

Although I believe that institutional accountability is an essential piece in this equation, I also believe that teacher training programs can place a heavy emphasis in this regard. Many scholars in the field have discussed the importance of creating self-regulated learning environments as it is positively related to student achievement (Gnoleba, Kitsantas, & Hiller, 2018; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). However, how much do teacher training programs emphasize on the creation of self-regulated learning environments? If a teacher understands the impact of student self-regulatory skills, then they are likely to create an environment suited for self-regulatory growth.

In terms of context, parents and teachers play a role in student achievement. Bempechat discussed socioeconomic differences in perceptions of homework and overall parental support. This point highlights the importance of creating partnerships between parents and teachers. That is, if teachers and parents both have the goal of building self-regulatory skills within students, then students will likely develop these skills. Even parents that may not be skilled in a particular academic area can encourage the development of self-regulatory skills by encouraging time-management and help-seeking. In sum, student success is a combination of personal (i.e., self-regulatory skills) and contextual factors (i.e., teacher and parental support).

It was an honor to work with preeminent educators for this special edition of our Times Magazine. As these reflections reveal, the quality of homework is a scientific unit of investigation that should result in the improvement of learning. Indeed, teachers and parents are essential in this regard. The article and these reflections encapsulate current trends in the scientific study of the actual value of homework. They advance the understanding that quality of homework matters if we aim for students to be skilled, self-regulated learners. I thank Dr. Janice Bempechat and all contributors for their vision of the practical ways in which quality of homework could be significantly improved in classrooms and homes. I appreciate the opportunity that the AERA SSRL SIG and Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Héfer Bembenutty, gave me to serve as editor of this particular issue of our Times Magazine.

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## The Homework Cyclical Self-Regulated Culturally Proactive Model

Dr. Héfer Bembenutty

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**T**he *Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning, and How Parents Can Help*, is the latest remarkable work of Dr. Janine Bempechat. In the article reported in *Education Next* (Winter 2019), Bempechat shared the results of her many years researching the battle over homework, the homework-achievement connections, the learners' beliefs and actions toward homework, and the association between homework and social class. In this article, she focused on the role parents could play in lessening the battle over homework (Cooper, 2015).

In the article, three points significantly called my attention. First, Bempechat pointed out that, "developmentally appropriate homework can help children cultivate positive beliefs about learning." She observed that parents and teachers can foster motivation and achievement. Second, she argued that parents' beliefs and actions can promote achievement, motivation, and homework success by establishing homework routines, eliminating distractions, and by promoting time management. She also argued that self-regulation is essential for homework motivation. Third, Bempechat called attention to the association between homework and social class, discouraging the differences between affluent and low-income families. She observed that low-income parents are not necessarily passive about their children homework tasks and delineates cultural differences on homework beliefs and actions. Bempechat displayed an unwavering commitment to spreading that quality homework improves learning when parents, teachers, and students work together in such a way that homework can be productive.

A response to Bempechat's call for quality homework is the culturalization of theory and research on homework by promoting the development of self-regulatory skills (Bembenutty, 2013). Bembenutty (2013) argued that research and theory on homework need to consider both universal psychological factors associated with homework. He posited that instruction and research need to consider both the students' contextual factors in which students engage in homework. To promote the culturalization of homework, Bembenutty and White (2013) used homework logs where the individual and contextual factors are concomitantly assessed with culturally-valid instruction and assessments.

An integral response to Bempechat's article requires the development of a new homework model; that is, the homework cyclical self-regulated culturally proactive model. The *homework cyclical self-regulated culturally proactive model* focuses attention first in the classroom setting. It is cyclical in its processes and starts in the classroom, continues at home, and return to the classroom (see Table 2). In school, teachers serve as role models of self-regulation, and students observe, emulate, and practice self-regulation in the paths to develop self-regulatory skills. In school environments, teachers engage in forethought processes, such as self-efficacy, goal setting, and selecting appropriate strategies while pursuing important learning objectives. In addition, school environments provide opportunities for students observe and emulate teachers while integrating self-regulatory processes through their socio-cultural lens, personality, language, and cognitive capabilities. Teachers provide opportunities for learners to perform tasks by engaging in imagery, self-instruction, attention focuses, selection of strategies, self-monitoring, and by partaking in self-experimentation consistent with their cultural lens. Teachers also engage in self-reflection by judging the outcomes against selected standards, goals, and

objectives. In the self-reflection phase, teachers make appropriate attributions to tasks' results, examine the level of self-satisfaction, and display adaptive responses to favorable outcomes while avoiding defensive tendencies (White & Bembenutty, 2014, 2016; Zimmerman, 2013). In this model, both teachers and students "think in the language of strategies," develop "self-standards," and "generate their own feedback" before, during, and after homework completion (Cleary, 2018, pp. 153-154).

In the homework cyclical self-regulated culturally proactive model, parents are essential agents for supporting self-regulation. Parents can be involved in their children's homework tasks by following the model of self-regulation with its three cyclical phases. For instance, when children come home with homework, parents can assist them by identifying goals and strategies to complete the tasks while assuring them that positive self-beliefs result in positive outcomes. Once children are doing their job (Corno & Xu, 2004), during the performance phase, parents can remind them to use strategies such as imagery, staying focused, to delay gratification, and by assuring children that staying focused on the homework will pay off significantly as opposed to going to a party. Parents reminding their children that effective strategies (i.e., staying focused and prioritizing) lead to positive outcomes will help their children in the long run. Parents play a vital role during the self-reflection phase by helping their children to identify appropriate and malleable sources of successes or failures. During the phase, parents can encourage children to stay positive and to refrain from defensive approaches as they lead to negative outcomes. An advantage of involving parents in the cyclical self-regulatory process is that the encouragement of parents will inherently integrate the socio-cultural factors ingrained in the home environment. At home, both parents and students could be agentic, proactive, and self-directed.

Within the homework cyclical self-regulated culturally proactive model, the culturalization of homework requires the development of new methods for assessing homework processes that will ingrain the cultural factors influencing these processes. As Bembenutty (2013) observed, researchers are invited to develop assessment tools, which could include microanalytic assessments, such as homework logs, dairies, computer traces, and cognitive interviewing, that will be sensitive to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, .

I salute Dr. Bempechat for calling for quality homework and for delineating how parents could help. I appreciate Ms. Michelle Gnoleba Séki's invitation to contribute to Times Magazine.

(references are available upon request)

(Continued on next page)

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## The Homework Cyclical Self-Regulated Culturally Proactive Model

**Dr. Héfer Bembenutty**

*(Continued from previous page)*

**Table 2: SRL Phases and Subprocesses within the Homework Cyclical Self-Regulated Culturally Proactive Model**

| Phases                 | SRL Processes          | Teachers  | Parents  | Students  |
|------------------------|------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Forethought</b>     | Self-efficacy          | Communicate the beliefs that all students can learn and performs designated tasks                           | Provide verbal prompts assuring children that they can do it   | Acquire the necessary skills that will foster self-beliefs to obtain an A in the homework   |
|                        | Goal setting           | Identify the specific personal outcomes after providing an appropriate instruction                          | Identify immediate and long-term goals important for the family  | Complete 20 math problems in an hour  |
|                        | Interest               | Connecting the homework with cultural aspects in which students are interested                              | Linking the homework with the family values and beliefs  | Connecting the importance of the homework to relevant personal and family cultural values   |
|                        | Strategic planning     | Model methods culturally appropriate for the tasks  | Identify strategies that could help to reach desired goals   | Use a scientific calculator to calculate Pi in a math problem.  |
|                        | Outcome expectancy     | Share confidence that the homework tasks will result in effective learning                                  | Share confidence that the homework tasks provide skills for future social, economic, and cultural benefits   | Foster self-beliefs that obtaining an A in the homework will help to be placed in the honor program   |
| <b>Performance</b>     | Self-instruction       | Use verbal prompt describing different ways in which a homework could be completed                          | Teach how to verbalize self-guidance while completing tasks  | Emulate a teacher self-guidance when solving challenging mathematic equations.  |
|                        | Imagery                | Explain the mental picture you visualize of a challenging math problem based on your cultural background    | Instruct children to mentally construct images of a geometric figure by using signs of their communities   | Imaging successful completion of a quadratic equation problem by using your personal experiences  |
|                        | Attention focusing     | Explain how concentration on task pay well in the long-term   | Provide a home environment that will foster learning   | Control the environment and social interactions   |
|                        | Task strategies        | Decipher the total task in its most minor components  | Help children to engage in distributed practice  | Focus first on most minor components of the tasks until the entire task is completed  |
|                        | Self-recording         | Convey the value of using homework logs and weekly planners   | Model how to use a weekly planner to keep track of essential tasks   | Use homework logs to be sure that tasks are completed on time and family and social events are not interfering with homework tasks                                    |
|                        | Self-experimentation   | Provide opportunities for variations on homework that students could complete based on their idiosyncrasies | Suggest alternative ways in which homework can be completed  | Try out innovative ways consistent with cultural and social values  |
|                        | Delay of gratification | Describe how long-term goals can be achieved by postponing immediately available but less valuable rewards  | Model how to make choices between immediately available rewards that preclude reaching important sociocultural goals                                       | Prioritize between highly valuable but temporarily distant rewards and immediately available competing rewards that could distract from important goals.              |
| <b>Self-reflection</b> | Self-evaluation        | Compare the homework outcomes with the standards  | Help children to judge their homework performance with their goals   | Refine homework outcomes when they are below standards  |
|                        | Causal attribution     | Attribute homework outcomes to malleable causes   | Attribute homework outcomes to controllable situations rather than to fixed ability, intelligence, ethnicity, race, or socio-economic status               | Attribute homework success or failures to errors, self-efficacy or selection of strategies.   |
|                        | Self-satisfaction      | Display appropriate level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction when tasks are favorable or unfavorable        | Focus the assessment of homework performance on intrinsic motivation   | Do not get overly distressed of adverse homework outcomes, instead focus on how to improve it or the next assignment  |
|                        | Adaptive actions       | Model ways to respond to positive homework outcomes, as well as adverse outcomes                            | Facilitate opportunities to celebrate positive homework outcomes and watch for signals of self-handicapping as a response to unfortunate homework outcomes | Celebrate with culturally expressions positive homework outcomes, avoid feelings of helplessness, procrastination, and apathy when getting inimical homework outcomes |

## Reflection on Bempechat's Article *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning and How Parents Can Help*

Dr. Maria K. DiBenedetto

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This reflection begins with a brief overview of issues related to homework addressed by Bempechat (2019), followed by additional issues related to homework from my experience as a scholar and recent high school teacher.

Homework, while historically being a controversial topic in education, is even more so today. Bempechat indicates that research shows homework to be beneficial to students' achievement and to promoting self-regulated learning processes such as self-monitoring, development of strategy use, and time management. Parents often think of homework as crucial in bridging the connection between home and school and for reinforcing what students are learning in school. Teachers see value in homework as it provides opportunities for students to practice what was taught during the day, builds self-efficacy and skills through mastery, and gives students' a sense of responsibility. Although there are several reported advantages, Bempechat also highlights many of the disadvantages.

Bempechat indicates that much research connecting homework and achievement tends to be correlational with inconsistent findings at the elementary school level. Disparities exist among countries, as well as by income level on time spent on homework. These disparities are potentially due to a number of factors such as less homework assignments by teachers who hold lower expectations for minority and low income students, an inability for bilingual or working parents to assist their children or afford tutoring, and heavy homework workloads for students from high income families forcing them to stay up late at night to try to complete homework following an afternoon of sports and other extracurricular activities competing for their time.

Community, school, and parental support are emphasized as essential for helping students engage in meaningful homework which can contribute positively to academic achievement (Bempechat). Afterschool programs which provide structure and services such as tutoring in addition to involving a parent or family member can help provide students not only the skills needed for homework completion but also processes related to self-regulated learning.

An additional recommendation is that teachers do not burden students with "busy work." Quality homework involves assignments that have a clear purpose and connection to what was learned in school and make efficient use of the limited time students have after school. According to Bempechat,

high-quality homework fosters self-directedness, time management skills, and self-efficacy. Teachers administering quality homework provide students with choices, differentiate tasks to allow for student success and provide models for students in advance of homework completion who demonstrate strategies for solving challenging tasks.

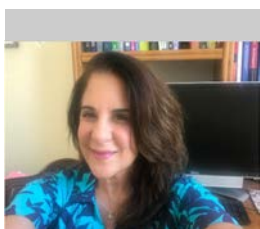
In addition to the issues presented by Bempechat, I believe research is needed that explores the negative associations that many students (and teachers) have about homework. Homework is sometimes used as a punishment or a reward. For example, students who are misbehaving might be given homework because the teacher is frustrated with the classroom behavior and unable to complete the lesson she needed to cover in class. On the flip side, teachers may reward students by eliminating a homework assignment for good behavior or performance. Behaviorism has taught educators and students that reinforcements and punishers strengthen or eliminate the behavior, and teachers will often use homework in these ways, which enhances negative connotations about homework.

I would add that an additional area of research needed is on reframing classroom language and whether this enhances students' motivation and achievement. Most of us have negative associations with the word "work," and yet, as educators, we are continually using that term in our daily language expecting students to embrace the activities; for example, classwork, schoolwork, homework, get your work done. Who wants to do work at home after you spent a day working in school? Teachers should put themselves in the developmental mindset of students in their classes and consider using terminology that moves away from the burden associated with doing "work" by presenting activities which are fun and engaging. For example, rather than telling students they need to practice music, why not tell them to play what they learned in class for their families or even their pets at home? School can be enjoyable, fun, and challenging while promoting motivation, self-regulation, and achievement. A few examples of ways to reframe homework are presented in Table 1.

Teacher education programs and professional development workshops should target homework as a critical component of intentional, effective, and self-regulated teaching. Teachers also need to learn ways to balance their own "homework," which often consists of developing lesson plans, assessment instruments, quality and time-efficient homework assignments, and grading. Creativity comes into play in reframing the language of education and the activities we teach and require of our students. I loved school when I was a student; how can we help foster the love and joy of our students so that they are motivated, engaged, and excited about learning and completing homework?

Table 1. Examples of Ways to Reframe Homework

| Traditional Classroom Language            | Reframed Classroom Language  |
|---|--|
| Homework math problems                    | You are a detective and need to demonstrate your ability to solve a mystery ...the mystery of x - can you solve these word problems? |
| Reading assignments                       | Get cozy on your couch or bed and enjoy reading pages .....  |
| Term paper on dinosaurs                   | Here is a wonderful opportunity to do some research and teach me about everything you learned about dinosaurs                        |
| Research assignment on carnivorous sharks | Pick one the of the most frightening sharks that you are curious about and learn everything you can about it                         |
| Complete this concept map for homework    | Tonight, pretend you are Picasso and create the most beautiful concept map – using words or pictures                                 |



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## The Multiple Dimensions of Homework Practices: A Reflection of *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning and How Parents Can Help*

Dr. Suzanne E. Hiller

Wingate University

A common dilemma for educational psychologists worldwide is how to translate theoretical findings to practical applications. In *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why it Improves Learning and How Parents can Help*, Bempechat masterfully tackles implications of homework practices beyond achievement measures to incorporate self-regulatory and motivational factors which are translatable to practitioners, administrators, parents, and stakeholders.

Throughout this work Bempechat examines the nexus between quality and quantity of homework from a variety of perspectives, including (a) related factors to achievement, (b) the impact of self-motivational beliefs in connection to homework practices, (c) parental influences in the homework dynamic, (d) equity of homework in terms of social class, and (e) community support of homework habits. The work highlights that research which targets achievement measures to quantity and quality of homework across age groups and subject matter, may be limited in the scope of the overall influence of homework. Most notably, homework practices have the capacity to support students' self-motivational beliefs and self-regulatory routines in tandem with academic achievement. According to Bempechat, the implications of building self-regulatory processes enable students to become autonomous learners (Zimmerman, 2013) skilled in using their skill sets rooted in homework practice to enhance overall achievement and resiliency.

The influence of homework in establishing self-regulatory processes and high motivation levels is even more pronounced in students from varying socioeconomic classes. Bempechat cites the disparities between high income students with heightened pressures to perform in comparison to students of low socioeconomic status who may not be receiving the same quantity/quality of homework as well as parental support. Bempechat offers that these differences can be offset by including parents and community members in support structures for students in completing homework. Those parents who may not be skilled in particular academic areas may still augment self-regulatory processes by assisting their children with time-management, environmental structuring, and help seeking.

Two common themes throughout this article include home/school connections and the need for a balance between quality and quantity of homework. This assertion aligns with previous writings on the need for balance between quantity and quality of homework in conjunction with self-regulation (Bembenutty, 2013; Kitsantas & Zimmerman, 2009). In addition, throughout the work, Bempechat alludes to a third dimension of homework aside from *quality* and *quantity*; that is, *consistency* of homework is an additional area of study worth examining. Bempechat addresses the level of regularity with which students complete homework based on national/regional differences, variances in student performance, and age. For instance, students from low performing schools in California were found to have minimal, inconsistent homework as compared to peers from high performing schools. For at-risk students, consistency in homework may be a key in promoting self-motivational beliefs and achievement and can be fostered by teachers (Hiller, 2017). Bempechat's writing gives rise to the notion that assessing ways in which teachers and parents encourage homework consistency in concert with quality and quantity is a future avenue of study for researchers.

Bempechat highlights the central role of parents in establishing positive beliefs about homework and offers suggestions for adults to encourage student learning through well-designed homework programs. In an extension of this idea, teachers well-versed in self-regulatory practices may guide parents through activities, questioning skills, and homework guidance via e-newsletters (Hayes, Hiller, & Kitsantas, 2018). Establishing home-school connections through additional research is a second possible offshoot from Bempechat's work.

Bempechat's article is a strong tool for bridging home-school connections. The factors which overlap both homework and self-regulatory processes are clearly described in a way that is applicable to a large array of learning platforms across grade levels, demographic factors, subject domains, and disciplines.

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## Critiquing Homework: Why and How Out-of-School Work Should be Assigned

### Mr. Salvatore Garofalo

*Queens College, CUNY*

Janine Bempechat surveys the current homework landscape in “The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why it Improves Learning, and How Parents Can Help.” Throughout the article, Bempechat argues that homework takes various forms during an individual’s academic career. The examination of the appropriateness of homework assignments during elementary, middle, and high school years unveiled a framework of scaffolding out-of-school assignments that increase in time and complexity with age. However, historically, and for a vast majority of students, homework has been mindless, time-consuming, and often fails to serve a higher academic purpose than simple repetition and recitation. One practical solution to this issue that is offered is to ensure that homework assignments are authentic and practical. In short, the quality of the homework assignment is essential. Bempechat also considers the impact of parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and cultural differences on homework. These considerations highlight equity issues in education, especially in the assignment of homework and demonstrate a need for change. The various topics covered in the article lead to a simple message: homework is an important and worthwhile endeavor provided it contains age and content appropriate tasks that are thought-provoking yet meaningful and motivating.

Overall, I believe that Bempechat provides a worthwhile overview of the state of homework assignments. However, the article avoids a clear stance on the issue and provide a meaningful path forward for change. In order to achieve these goals, the following questions must be answered: What is the function of homework? How can a significant and meaningful shift in homework culture take place? Who should be involved in making the change?

There are two major considerations for homework: academic achievement and the formation of learning beliefs and behaviors. In order to allow for this shift to occur, stakeholders must agree on which of these considerations is most important. I suggest that a focus on the formation of learning beliefs and behaviors is critical to create lifelong learners and to provide essential self-regulatory skills in the future. A byproduct most likely will be an increase in academic achievement. To accomplish this goal, homework assignments must not be viewed as a chore that has to be worked through. Instead, the assignments should be motivating and provide opportunities to solve epistemologically and personally meaningful problems. Once students are invested in a solution, they will learn along the way. From a purely cognitive lens, students will better be able to understand and remember a topic if they generate the information themselves (Slamecka & Graf, 1978; Jacoby, 1983). Therefore, homework assignments that require effort would be beneficial provided students already knew a significant amount of the material that would allow them to successfully and correctly complete the assignment.

Too often in education are best practices developed, debated, and discussed, yet nothing changes. To accomplish meaningful change, there must be agreement and collaboration among all stakeholders. If the best method to assign homework to students is a shift away from repetition and memorization and towards generative knowledge through motivating problem-solving, then change must occur from the bottom up. Teacher preparatory programs need to instill the benefits of these homework assignments. Administrators in schools need to put forth homework guidelines for older faculty members, perhaps through a series of professional development sessions, to ensure change. Parents, guardians, and community leaders must also be on board as they will be the facilitators outside of school to ensure a cultural shift. Change in education must be a collaborative effort. If a shift in homework policy is going to be made, then a stance must be taken, and a plan must be initiated.

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## Why Quality Homework Matters: Bridging the Gap from School to Home

Dr. Erin M. Ramirez

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In her 2019 article, "The case for (quality) homework: Why it improves learning, and how parents can help" Bempechat answers the decades long question of whether homework matters; in sum: it depends. At the elementary level, homework tends to not correlate with academic success; however, at the secondary level, there is a strong positive correlation. Research has yet to determine if homework is causally related to achievement.

Although causal relationships have not yet been established, Bempechat articulates how research has shown that, at all levels of education, homework leads to students forming positive learning beliefs. Those beliefs significantly impact students' perception about ability, mastery-orientation, and expectations of themselves and their future. Moreover, research has shown that student's learning beliefs are one of the most significant impacts on their academic outcomes (e.g., Tournaki & Podell, 2005). These beliefs often lead to greater self-regulation and higher levels of self-efficacy, both of which are critical components towards higher student autonomy and academic success (Nota, Soresi, & Zimmerman, 2004; Pajaras & Schunk, 2001). If the purpose of education is to prepare students to become productive civically-minded individuals, then it becomes paramount that all students are given opportunities to increase their beliefs about themselves and their abilities. Thus, it becomes vital that educators seek to provide quality homework that instills said beliefs in students.

One of the most significant areas of improvement in assigning homework that Bempechat articulates is the need for equity in the amount of homework given to students from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds. More specifically, the article specifies the large gap between the amount and quality of homework given to affluent students (too much at high levels) versus their lower economic counterparts (too little at lower levels). Without closing the gap between these two groups in regards to homework, the educational community is merely exacerbating the achievement gap by not providing students from lower economic backgrounds the opportunities to foster those positive learning beliefs outside of the classroom. Additionally, research has demonstrated that low-income parents view homework as critical to connecting the school to home; providing another mechanism by which homework can bridge the school to the home pipeline.

The goal is not to provide all students with the same amount of homework, instead to provide equitable homework to all students. As such, teachers should seek to provide homework that is: just beyond student's current abilities, intensive, frequent, an application of learned content, and purposeful and connected to classwork. When homework is assigned in such a way, students can navigate what they have learned in class and apply it to their homework; extending and expanding their knowledge. As a former high school English teacher, I know firsthand the difficulty in attempting to balance the amount and rigor of homework; however, with proper pre-service coursework new teachers can be provided models of how to best balance the conundrum of homework.

Teacher educator programs should place value in teaching pre-service candidates how to use homework effectively in their classrooms. By giving candidates explicit instruction and models on how to balance and differentiate homework for various learners, we can seek to close the achievement gap. Practicing teachers should work towards balancing difficulty and time, being intentional with their homework assignments, and building relationships with parents through homework (e.g., TIPS). Finally, both administrators and teachers should work towards building and cultivating a culture of lifelong learning, both inside and outside of school. Regardless of economic status, all students deserve an educational environment that promotes critical thinking and high academic expectations, and one way to foster these skills is through the use of balanced quality homework.

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# AERA SSRL SIG Times Magazine

## Homework, Self-regulated Learning, and Self-efficacy: A Reflection of *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why It Improves Learning and How Parents can Help*

Ms. Melissa Quackenbush  
Old Dominion University

**F**lashback to Spring 2017, I was seated around a large wooden conference table with a dozen school and district administrators discussing the pros and cons of revising homework policy in response to parent and Board of Education members' calls for change in current practices. Concerns included students' physical and emotional well-being regarding being assigned too many hours of homework a night and the time encroaching on adolescent students' much-needed sleep. Additional concerns focused on maintaining rigor and coverage of curriculum in order to most effectively prepare students for AP and state assessments. Some members advocated eliminating homework while others advocated for more homework. Each argument, either for or against the policy change, was supported with empirical research; however, the inconclusiveness of the points discussed on homework practice did not provide clear direction or support consensus among the members of the administrative team.

While this example is specific to my experience working in public education, it is indicative of countless conversations taking place worldwide among education leaders, teachers, teacher candidates, and concerned parents about the future of homework practices in the 21st century. As society evolves, educational practices and policies must change in response, and Bempechat's article provides an overview of current homework practices and suggests how homework practices can evolve to more effectively support students and parents' connections to their child's learning and growth.

Bempechat introduces readers to the struggle many students and parents experience as they endeavor to complete homework given the realities of life in the 21st century. While eliminating the practice of homework would solve the challenge of managing busy schedules, Bempechat explains that the quantity of homework is much less a concern than the quality of homework assigned. She advocates for teachers to co-construct authentic learning experiences with students to extend learning objectives covered during school hours to real-world applications. Parents' roles as opportunity-makers for their children are discussed, and Bempechat suggests that teachers and schools strengthen the home-learning connections with curriculum extensions that allow students to engage their parents in meaningful ways during homework activity.

The case for quality homework activity and parent involvement resonates with me as both a parent and as an education leader. Bempechat's article highlights what is most important about engaging in homework activity – to support students' self-regulated learning and provide opportunities to develop healthy self-efficacy about academic tasks (Bembenutty, 2013). Research on student achievement has demonstrated strong relationships with students' self-efficacy (Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Pajares & Schunk, 2001); therefore, what is most significant for the future of homework is to focus on developing quality learning experiences using homework practices in order to improve student's self-efficacy. When a student's self-efficacy is strengthened, his/her adaptive self-regulated learning abilities are more likely to engage during challenging learning experiences, which supports healthy life-long learning behaviors and habits of mind.



Ms. Melissa Quackenbush is an Education Consultant at Engage Momentum LLC, and she is in her second year at Old Dominion University as a full-time Ph.D. student in the Educational Psychology and Program Evaluation program. When she is not reading or writing, Melissa enjoys time with her family and friends.

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**Response to Commentaries on**  
***The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why it Improves Learning and How Parents Can Help***  
**Dr. Janine Bempechat**  
**Boston University**

I am delighted to have this opportunity to comment on seven very thoughtful reflections on my recent analysis of the benefits of homework, *The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why it Improves Learning and How Parents Can Help* (Bempechat, 2019). In reviewing these reflections, I am especially struck by two primary observations made by my esteemed colleagues. First, they allude to the fact that we must take preservice teacher training for homework seriously. Second, they point out that, at a time when the value of homework is increasingly contested in the national discourse, there exist research directions that can indeed quell doubts about the benefits of homework in fostering self-regulatory skills and knowledge. I take up each of these in turn below.

My colleagues note several key ways in which teacher training programs should prepare future teachers to design, grade, and manage homework assignments that contribute to student development, with a focus on homework as a tool to help students develop skills of self-regulation. They rightly note that professional development should include training preservice teachers to create high-quality assignments (Garofolo, Quackenbush) that future teachers can use effectively in the classroom (Ramirez) to build students' self-regulatory skills (Seki). Hiller notes that teachers who are experienced in self-regulatory practices can guide parents in optimal ways to assist their children with homework tasks. Exposure to such practices must, of necessity, begin in preservice courses. Bembenutty's careful descriptions of successful applications of the Learning Academy and cyclical homework self-regulated culturally proactive models highlight the extent to which the positive impact of homework hinges on adequately trained teachers. Homework-related training, I argue, should occur at the preservice phase of teachers' education, along with instruction on how to re-frame homework as discovery and creativity (DiBenedetto).

In this context, it may surprise our members to learn that little preparation for the design and management of homework (let alone guidance on how to navigate the political waters of homework) appears to be taking place in teacher education programs. I recently teamed with Dr. Margarita Jimenez-Silva, director of teacher education at the University of California, Davis, to study teacher preparation for homework at a small private and a large teachers college education programs.

We examined (1) how

teacher educators and administrators view the importance of preparing preservice teachers to manage issues of homework during student teaching and future work; (2) the extent to which national and state professional standards provide teacher educators with guidance on how to prepare future elementary school teachers to address issues of homework; and (3) the extent to which methods course syllabi address homework through course objectives, readings, and assignments (Bempechat et al., 2018).

From this study with teachers college education programs, we learned that teacher educators and administrators believe that homework design and learning how to navigate difficult conversations around homework are critical issues that should be taken up in methods courses. But they acknowledged that they had little time to do so, in light of competing demands to cover content. Many expressed the expectation that these issues, especially as they affect diverse families, were being discussed in field placement sites but could not confirm that they were occurring in anything resembling a systematic manner. Our analysis of methods course syllabi revealed that homework was rarely addressed through course readings, planned discussions, or assignments. Finally, review of four national and two state (Massachusetts and Arizona) professional standards (encompassing a total of 220 standards) revealed that no standards explicitly addressed homework and very few standards are targeted at developing competence in home-school partnerships. In the two programs we reviewed, preservice teachers are receiving minimal guidance on how to (1) design developmentally

*(Continued on next page)*

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**Response to Commentaries on**  
***The Case for (Quality) Homework: Why it Improves Learning and How Parents Can Help***  
**Dr. Janine Bempechat**  
*(Continued from previous page)*

appropriate, meaningful, and culturally relevant homework tasks, and (2) engage with key stakeholders. My colleagues' reflections support the view that a premium should be placed on scaffolding preservice teachers to meet these challenges.

The reflections also highlight the essential connections between homework and self-regulation. As I argued in my initial article, homework's benefits are many. The responses place a spotlight on one of those benefits: the increased ability to self-regulate that homework helps students to develop. Hiller's comment provides an important avenue for further work on the issue of equity in self-regulation training through homework. What programs can educators put in place to support under-resourced schools in their quest to provide high-quality homework consistently? DiBenedetto points to discourse analysis as a way of changing the narrative around homework as drudgery. More specifically, how might students differentially construct homework assignments when teachers describe those tasks as opportunities to discover, create, and enjoy the process of learning new concepts and acquiring new skills?

In the ongoing debate about the value of homework, it is the homework-achievement connection that is the most scrutinized and which receives the most attention from educators, family and community members, and the media. This scrutiny obscures the critical role that homework plays in fostering the self-regulatory processes that all children need to develop to become skilled learners. Our collective work can help to tip the balance and inform stakeholders that carefully designed, engaging, and developmentally appropriate homework is a crucial tool that teachers and family members can use to prepare children to meet the challenges ahead.

When the Times Magazine's Editor-in-Chief Héfer Bembenutty invited me to write a response commentary to the excellent reflections on my *Education Next* article on homework (Bempechat, 2019), I was humbled. I am grateful to Michelle Gnoleba for serving as the editor of this special issue. The insightful reflections inspired me to continue calling for quality homework to improve learning and finding ways for parents, administrators, and teacher training programs to help. I hope that my commentary serves as a venue for more research and applications that would result in preparing teachers to engage with families and students around homework.

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#### A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Bempechat is internationally recognized as one of the foremost experts in homework research. She is an extraordinary human being and a self-regulated educator. Her leadership skills and talents, her commitment to a homework self-regulated culturally proactive pedagogy, her social justice, diversity, and inclusion have significantly contributed to the growth of educational and psychological investigation of homework as a scientific area of study.

Dr. Bempechat is truly an icon in the field of homework research.

#### Excerpts from Bempechat's Article

**“What constitutes high-quality homework? Assignments that are developmentally appropriate and meaningful and that promote self-efficacy and self-regulation. Meaningful homework is authentic, allowing students to engage in solving problems with real-world relevance. More specifically, homework tasks should make efficient use of student time and have a clear purpose connected to what they are learning.”**

**“Broadly, learning beliefs fall under the banner of achievement motivation, which is a constellation of cognitive, behavioral, and affective factors, including: the way a person perceives his or her abilities, goal-setting skills, expectation of success, the value the individual places on learning, and self-regulating behavior such as time-management skills. Positive or adaptive beliefs about learning serve as emotional and psychological protective factors for children, especially when they encounter difficulties or failure.”**

**“Self-regulation involves a number of skills, such as the ability to monitor one's performance and adjust strategies as a result of feedback; to evaluate one's interests and realistically perceive one's aptitude; and to work on a task autonomously. It also means learning how to structure one's environment so that it's conducive to learning, by, for example, minimizing distractions.”**