

French parents to boycott homework: Children would be better off reading a book rather than doing tasks at home which are useless and tiring, says group

By Kim Willsher

March 26, 2012

The Guardian Online:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/26/french-parents-boycott-homework>

A group of French parents and teachers have called for a two-week boycott of homework in schools, saying it is useless, tiring and reinforces inequalities between children.

They say homework pushes the responsibility for learning on parents and causes conflict between themselves and their children. And they conclude that children would be better off reading a book.

"If the child hasn't succeeded in doing the exercise at school, I don't see how they're going to succeed at home," said Jean-Jacques Hazan, the president of the FCPE, the main French parents' association, which represents parents and students in most of France's educational establishments.

"In fact, we're asking parents to do the work that should be done in class."

Homework is officially banned in French elementary schools, and has been since 1956. But many teachers ignore this and send children home with exercises to do. Older children often spend up to an hour each evening doing homework, and longer on the weekend or on Wednesdays when most schools close.

Catherine Chabrun, president of the teachers' organisation Co-operative Institute of Modern Schools (ICEM), says homework also reinforces inequalities.

"Not all families have the time or the necessary knowledge to help their children," she said.

The protesters calling for the ban say no one is contesting the idea of children being given "devoirs" – or exercises – just that they should be done during the school day and not at home. "Teachers don't realise the unbelievable pressure they are putting children under," said Hazan.

The question of whether young children should do homework has been a matter of fierce debate and disagreement in France since 1912.

A statement from the FCPE said: "Either a pupil has understood the lesson and succeeded in doing the exercises in class, in which case homework is a waste of time and stops them reading, for example, or they haven't understood and it's not at home in the absence of a teacher that they're going to do better."

Not all parents agree. Myriam Menez, general secretary of PEEP, another school parents' association, told *Le Parisien* giving primary school children homework prepared them for secondary school. "Of course it has to be reasonable, but going back over a lesson is the best way of learning things," she said.

Questions

Write 3 questions that would help you lead a discussion about the "Homework Boycott" news article. Remember you should not write comprehension questions about the article, but rather write discussion questions about the topic of the article.

Note: You don't need to write 10 questions; the extra space is given so that you can write down your classmates' questions next week.

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