

HOMWORK SURVEY – STAGE 1 - 2006

AIM

The aim of the survey was to assess the views of homework held by YEAR 1 parents / children with respect to the volume of homework, the time taken to complete homework and the degree of difficulty of the homework.

METHOD

A survey was drafted for YEAR 1 parents that explored various aspects of the homework as provided in Terms 1 & 2. The finalised survey provided by Avoca Beach Primary School was actually given out to all STAGE 1 parents, rather than specifically YEAR 1. The survey was distributed on 9th August 2006.

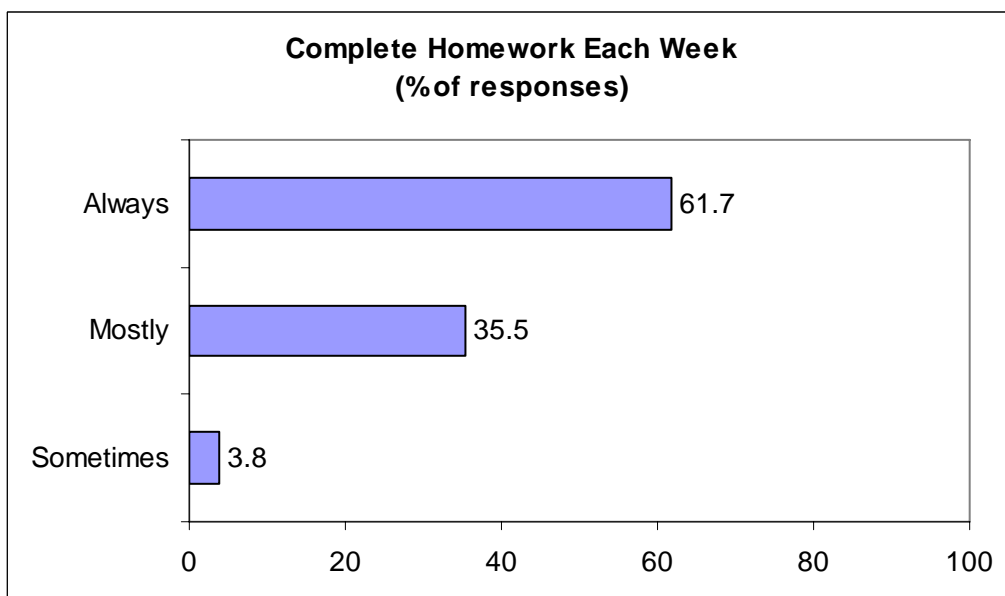
RESULTS

The homework survey was provided to all STAGE 1 parents, relating to a total of 112 children. In all 83 completed surveys were returned, representing a 74% response rate.

The responses are summarized below. It is important to note that in all cases the results discussed and percentages given are based only on the 83 who responded without any representation from the other 29 students. Therefore the sample does not cover the entire student population under consideration. Due to the nature of the survey, it is also quite likely to be biased towards parents who view homework and their child's education in a more positive sense. Another limiting factor of the survey, which is immediately obvious when analysing the results, is the lack of provision in the survey to identify if the respondent had a child in Year 1 or Year 2.

QUESTION 1:

Does your child complete all of the weekly homework ?

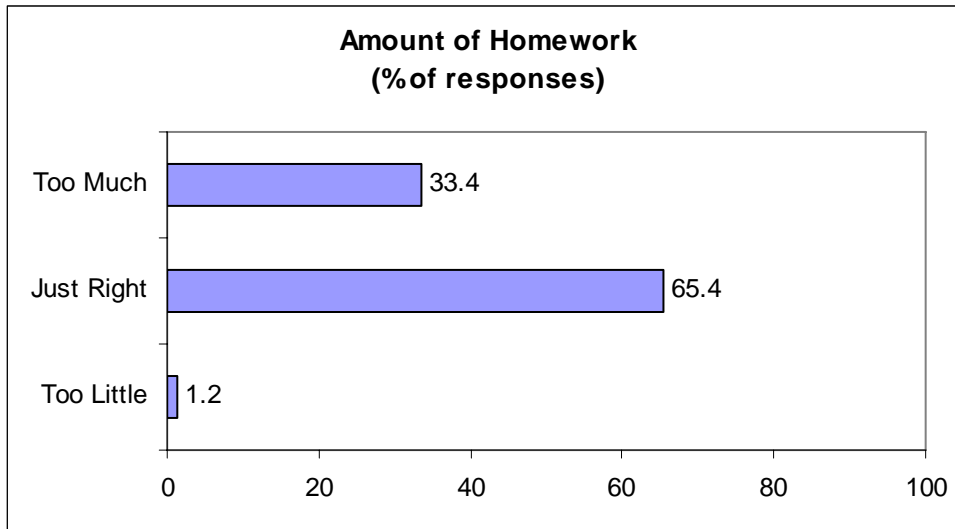


SUMMARY:

The responses to this question clearly suggest the majority of students completed the weekly homework on a regular basis. A small percentage of respondents indicated homework was only completed sometimes and there were no responses to 'never' completes homework.

QUESTION 2:

Parents Opinion on Amount of Weekly Homework

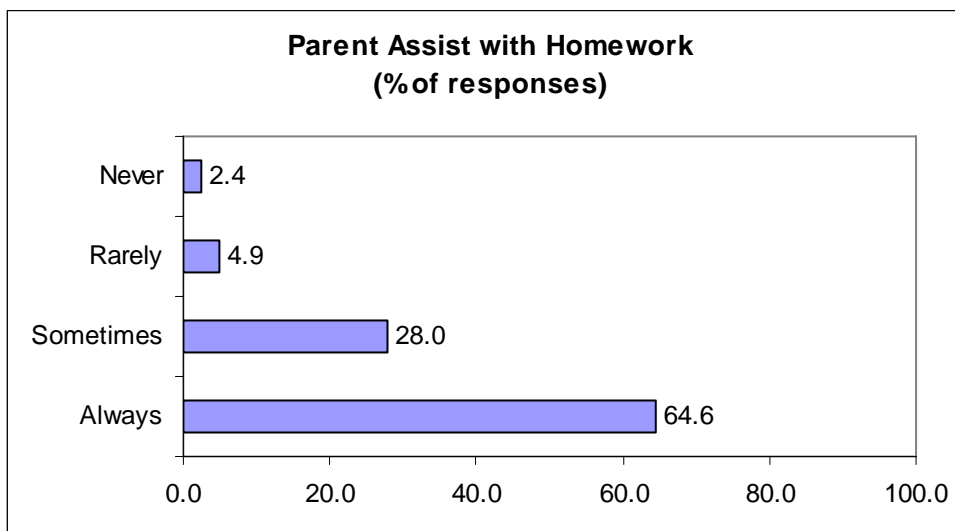


SUMMARY:

The clear majority of respondents (~65%) were happy with the **amount** of homework provided, however one third (33%) felt it was too much and only 1% felt it was too little. The finding that one third of the group indicated the workload was excessive is in itself a significant result but it would have been much more valuable to be able to break down the results into Year 1 and Year 2 children, especially considering the homework tasks are different for each group.

QUESTION 3:

Do parents assist their child with weekly homework?

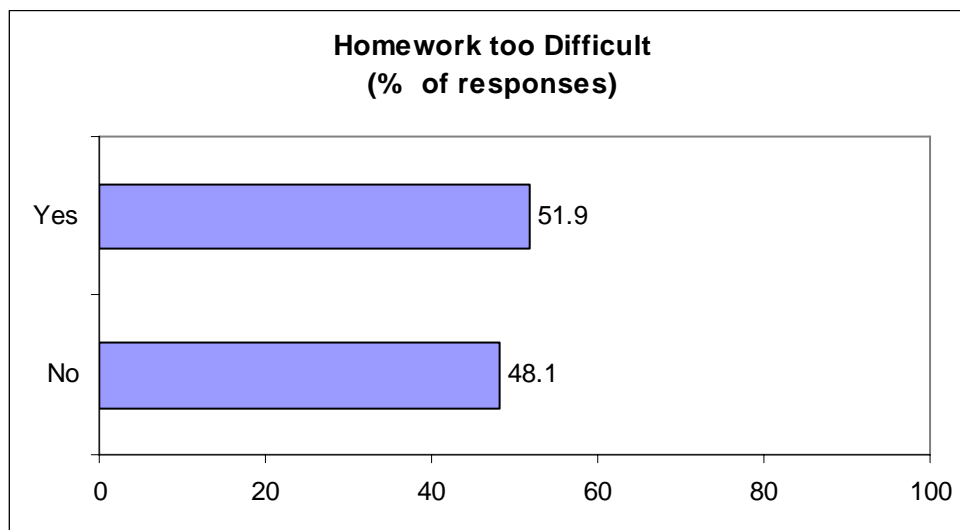


SUMMARY:

This question highlights the majority of respondents, (~93%) assisted their child with weekly homework either always (~65%) or sometimes (~28%). This response can be interpreted in a number of ways; it can be seen as an indication of positive parental involvement, or it may indicate that the homework is too difficult for students to complete on their own. The question does not provide information on what degree of assistance is provided. The degree of difficulty of the homework is examined below in Q4 and may provide some insight to how much assistance is given.

QUESTION 4 - Part 1:

Is any of the weekly homework too difficult or involve a lot of parental assistance / explanation?



SUMMARY:

My understanding of the aim of homework is that it acts as a revision of work children have learnt at school and should be able to be completed by most children independently. If this summation is correct, the fact that ~52% of respondents perceived the homework to be too difficult or involved too much parental assistance / explanation, suggests that perhaps the homework is pitched too high. Once again to be able to divide these results into Year 1 and Year 2 would provide more useful information.

QUESTION 4 - PART 2:

If 'yes' which part(s) of the homework did this relate to? (ie. too difficult or required too much parental assistance / explanation)

N.B. The following includes the responses from the 52% of parents who responded 'YES' to Question 4 - Part 1. Parents could indicate more than one response to this question therefore I have summarized the total number of responses against each subject

SPELLING - 6

MATHS / QUESTION SHEET - 40

HOME READER - 9

SIGHT WORDS - 8

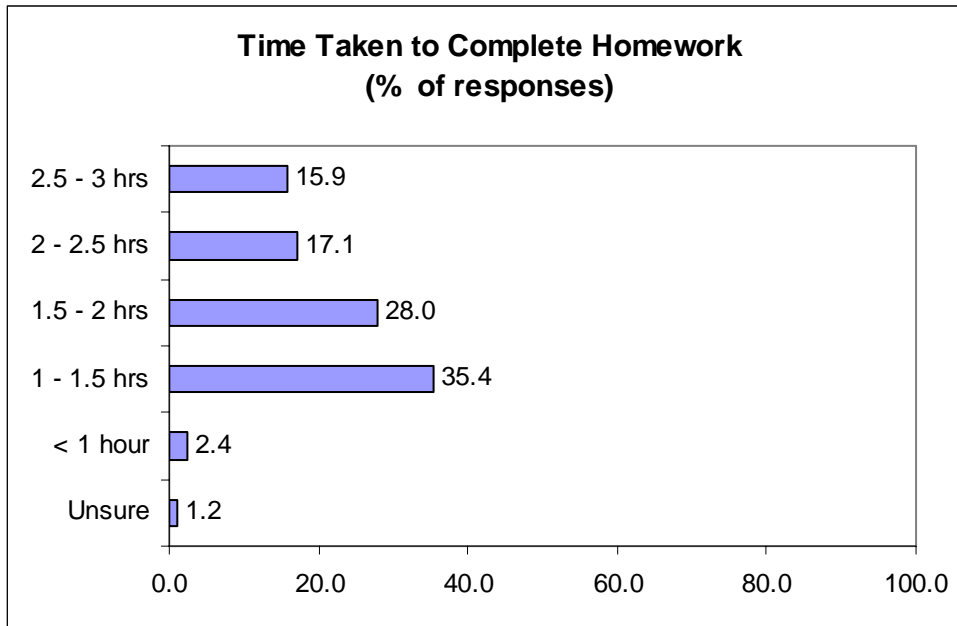
NEWS - 9

SUMMARY:

Clearly the Maths / Question Sheet presented the most problems with 40 responses against this. The other areas of homework had a fairly even baseline response. It is worth noting that in Term 3 the Maths / Question Sheet for Year One has been simplified and in some cases it is not included in the homework set.

QUESTION 5 - Part 1:

How much time is taken to complete all the elements of the weekly homework?

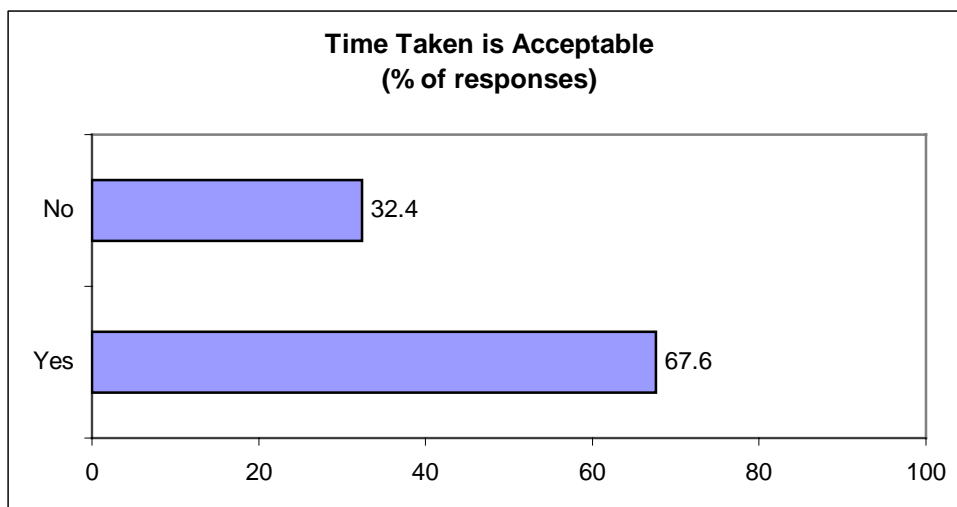


SUMMARY:

The majority of children (~63%) took between 1 - 2 hours per week to complete homework. Based on written information provided to Year 1 parents at the start of 2006 it was suggested that parents allow approximately 15 minutes per night (Mon - Thurs) to complete the written homework. Home reading appeared to be additional to this. This yields a total time to complete all homework tasks of approximately 2 hours per week. It would therefore seem that the majority of Stage 1 children surveyed, completed their homework within the suggested time frame. There was however still a significant proportion of children (one third) who were taking markedly longer. Once again knowing the mix of Year 1 versus Year 2 children here would have been useful.

QUESTION 5 - Part 2

Do you find this amount of time acceptable?

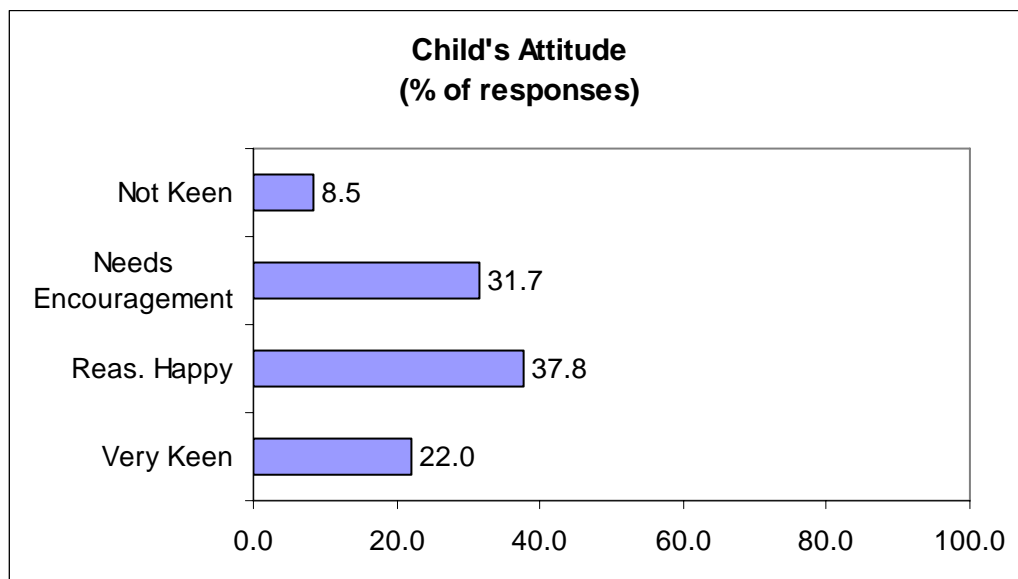


SUMMARY:

One third found the time taken unacceptable and two thirds found it acceptable. These results echo those from Question 5.1 above.

QUESTION 6:

How does the child generally respond to doing their homework?

**SUMMARY:**

This spread of results with the majority of children (~60%) either very keen or reasonably happy to do their homework is probably a very pleasing one for the teachers to view and sends a fairly positive message about homework.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MADE BY PARENTS ON SURVEY FORMS:

No attempt has been made to fully summarize all of the comments but the diversity of responses certainly makes interesting reading. There was a common thread to some of the comments relating to tiredness of this age group after school and not enough time for after school activities or just free/fun time. There were also a few who suggested a more flexible time frame for completing homework (incl. weekend period) or adopting the concept of a homework grid where other lifestyle activities count towards homework. There were also several mentions of making homework less difficult so children can complete it with less parental assistance. As there is always a flip side, there were also a few requests for more homework!

CONCLUSIONS

Having reviewed the results it is again important to note that 26% of the students in Stage 1 have not been represented by this data. It is also quite reasonable to speculate that the most motivated parents were the most likely to have responded to the survey and hence may have biased the results accordingly.

If we consider we may be hearing from a more positive end of the parent cohort it is noteworthy that one third found the homework volume too much, the vast majority of parents always assisted with homework, 52% of parents found it too difficult or involving a lot of parental assistance and a significant proportion of children spent more than 2 hours per week completing their homework with a similar proportion of parents finding this amount of time unacceptable.

Despite some general findings I strongly feel the usefulness of the survey was ultimately limited by the fact that there was no allowance made to distinguish between surveys for Year 1 & Year 2 students. I definitely would have recommended this distinction be made in the survey responses had I known it was to go to all of Stage 1. I personally feel that although Years' 1 & 2 are grouped together in Stage 1 we are dealing with significantly different levels of maturity in relation to their independence with homework tasks and physical factors relating to tiredness after school. To compound the results further, my understanding is that Year 1 & Year 2 students have significantly different homework tasks and therefore we are trying to examine two different sets of homework without knowing which the responses relate to.

As a final comment it is certainly positive to see such a large proportion of parents were keen to give their time and effort towards achieving a better outcome for their children. At the very least this survey has proved a worthwhile pilot exercise and should be helpful in guiding surveys that may be conducted in the future.

Last but not least a big thank you to the teachers who put so much effort into planning, providing and marking the homework in addition to all the input throughout the school day. Thank you for your consent to putting the survey out there and being open to the feedback it provides.