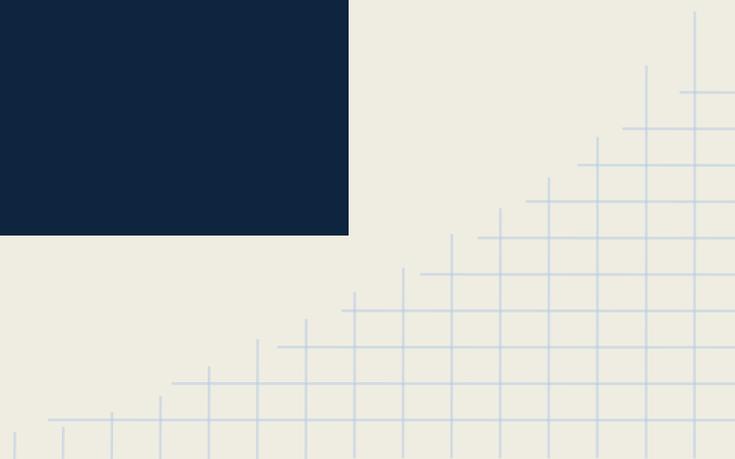




The Thoroughly Interesting Theories of....

Alfie Kohn

Mary Cefaratti & Jillian Sommerville

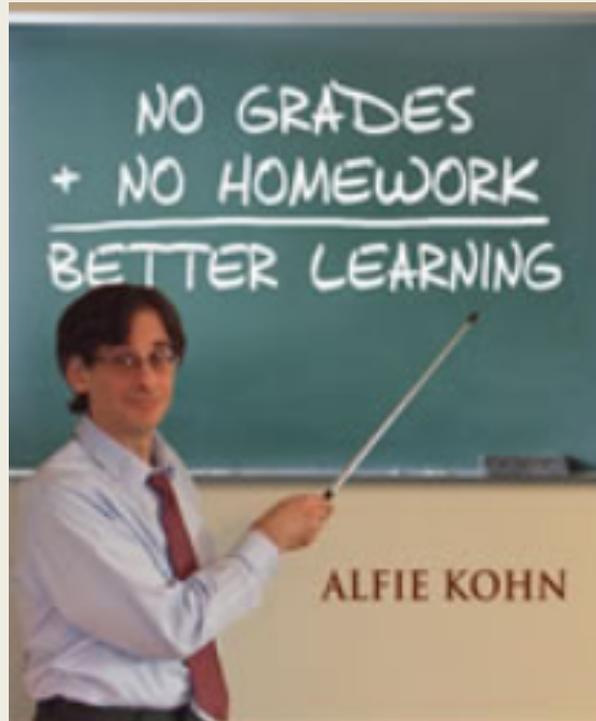


Let's get to know him a little more...

Are Children Like Vending Machines?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hS3m1ocWhhw>

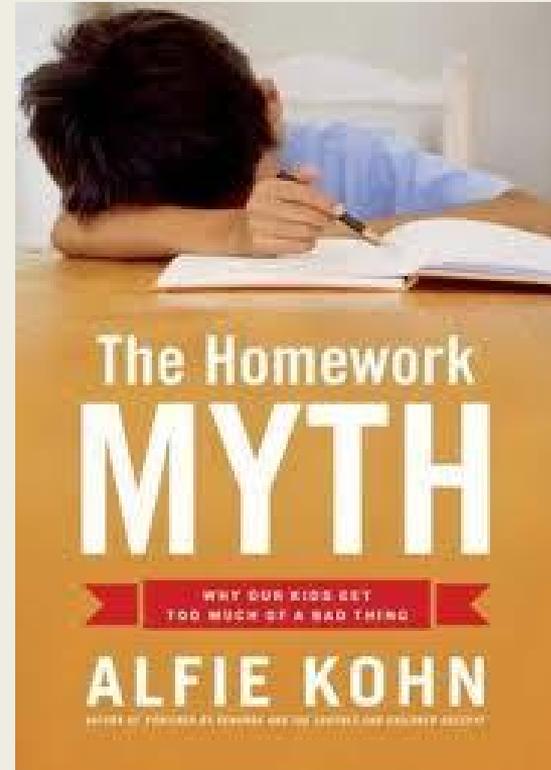
Theories of Alfie



No Homework!

- The negative effects of homework are well known,
- “No study has ever substantiated the belief that homework builds character or teaches good study habits.”
- More homework is being piled on children despite the absence of its value.
- Frustration, fights, over-time lull = poor psychological state
-

■ “Rethinking Homework”

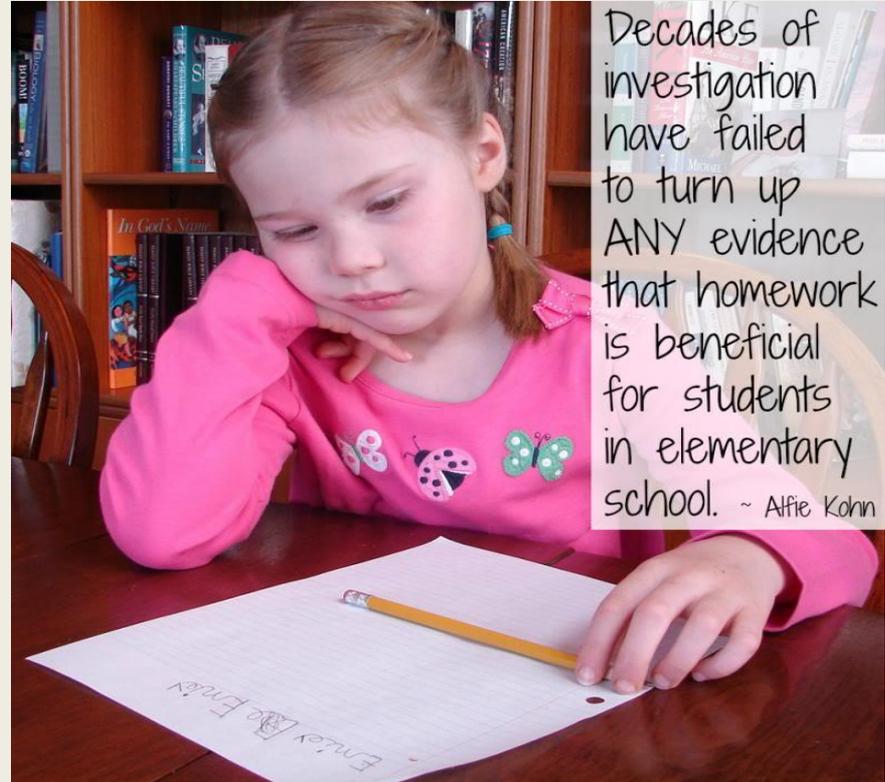


No Homework!

What are we to do?

- Re-think homework policies
- Focus on QUALITY not quantity
- Change the default:
“No homework except on those occasions when it’s truly necessary.”
- Ask for input from the kids
- Assign only what you design
- Use it as a decision making opportunity

“Rethinking Homework”



Decades of investigation have failed to turn up ANY evidence that homework is beneficial for students in elementary school. ~ Alfie Kohn

No Grades!



"I remember the first time that a grading rubric was attached to a piece of my writing....Suddenly all the joy was taken away. I was writing for a grade -- I was no longer exploring for me. I want to get that back. Will I ever get that back?"

-

Claire, a student (in Olson, 2006)

No Grades!

- Grades tend to diminish students' interest in whatever they're learning
- Grades create a preference for the easiest possible task
- Grades tend to reduce the quality of students thinking

No Grades!

If there are no grades, then what do we do?!?

- Provide qualitative feedback
- Invite students to join in the grading process
- Stronger relationships
- Self-evaluation, stronger awareness
- Accommodate to unique learning styles
- Deeper learning

Alfie's Ideal Classroom...

- Curiosity and cooperation are emphasized above all else.
 - Alfie believes that the students' curiosity should govern what is taught inside the classroom
- Alfie is very critical of Standardized testing
 - This type of testing enforced a strict curriculum that is not flexible to the students' interests and needs.

	GOOD SIGNS	POSSIBLE REASONS TO WORRY
FURNITURE	<p>Chairs around tables to facilitate interaction</p> <p>Comfortable areas for learning, including multiple "activity centers"</p> <p>Open space for gathering</p>	<p>Chairs all facing forward or (even worse) desks in rows</p>
ON THE WALLS	<p>Covered with students' projects</p> <p>Evidence of student collaboration</p> <p>Signs, exhibits, or lists obviously created by students rather than by the teacher</p> <p>Information about, and personal mementos of, the people who spend time together in this classroom</p>	<p>Nothing</p> <p>Commercial posters</p> <p>Students' assignments displayed, but they are (a) suspiciously flawless, (b) only from "the best" students, or (c) virtually all alike</p> <p>List of rules created by an adult and/or list of punitive consequences for misbehavior</p> <p>Sticker (or star) chart -- or other evidence that students are rewarded or ranked</p>

STUDENTS' FACES	Eager, engaged	Blank, bored
SOUNDS	Frequent hum of activity and ideas being exchanged	Frequent periods of silence The teacher's voice is the loudest or most often heard
LOCATION OF TEACHER	Typically working with students so it takes a few seconds to find her	Typically front and center
TEACHER'S VOICE	Respectful, genuine, warm	Controlling and imperious Condescending and saccharine-sweet
STUDENTS' REACTION TO VISITOR	Welcoming; eager to explain or demonstrate what they're doing or to use visitor as a resource	Either unresponsive or hoping to be distracted from what they're doing

<p>CLASS DISCUSSION</p>	<p>Students often address one another directly</p> <p>Emphasis on thoughtful exploration of complicated issues</p> <p>Students ask questions at least as often as the teacher does</p>	<p>All exchanges involve (or are directed by) the teacher; students wait to be called on</p> <p>Emphasis on facts and right answers</p> <p>Students race to be first to answer teacher's "Who can tell me...?" queries</p>
<p>STUFF</p>	<p>Room overflowing with good books, art supplies, animals and plants, science apparatus; "sense of purposeful clutter"</p>	<p>Textbooks, worksheets, and other packaged instructional materials predominate; sense of enforced orderliness</p>
<p>TASKS</p>	<p>Different activities often take place simultaneously</p> <p>Activities frequently completed by pairs or groups of students</p>	<p>All students usually doing the same thing</p> <p>When students aren't listening to the teacher, they're working alone</p>

AROUND THE SCHOOL

Appealing atmosphere: a place where people would want to spend time

Students' projects fill the hallways

Library well-stocked and comfortable

Bathrooms in good condition

Faculty lounge warm and inviting

Office staff welcoming toward visitors and students

Students helping in lunchroom, library, and with other school functions

Stark, institutional feel

Awards, trophies, and prizes displayed, suggesting an emphasis on triumph rather than community

Thoughts on Classroom Management

- “Hands Off” type of management approach
- “If classroom is run with cooperation in mind, and if the student’s curiosity is being nurtured, than students’ will act appropriately and neither rewards nor punishments will be necessary.

Progressive Progressive Progressive Education

What is it?

- Attending to the whole child
- Community
- Collaboration
- Social Justice
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Deep Understanding
- Active Learning
- Taking Kids Seriously

What is it not?

- Touchy-Feely
- Loosey-Goosey
- Fuzzy
- Fluffy
- Undemanding Exercises
- Kids are free to do whatever they like
- Curriculum is made of whatever students feel is fun
-

What the research says...

- Several newer studies confirm that traditional academic instruction for very young children is counterproductive.
- Students in elementary and middle school did better in science when their teaching was “centered on projects in which they took a high degree of initiative. Traditional activities, such as completing worksheets and reading primarily from textbooks, seemed to have no positive effect.”
- Another recent study found that an “inquiry-based” approach to learning is more beneficial than conventional methods for low-income and minority students.

“Progressive Education”

Why is it so rare?

- Less familiar
- Harder to do, especially well
- Asks more of students, throws them off
- More demanding of teachers
- Asks teachers to abandon the predictable march towards the right answer
- Revolves around uncertainty
- “Thinking is messy. Deep thinking is really messy.”

“Progressive Education”

STOP saying “Good job!”



1. Manipulating kids
2. Creating praise junkies
3. Stealing a child's pleasure
4. Losing interest
5. Reducing achievement

Then what should we say..?

- Say nothing
- Say what you saw, observed
- Talk less, ASK more



The Kohn Model

Think of your students as serious learners who construct knowledge from a variety of experiences. Organize the classroom into a community of learners, interconnected and concerned with each other. Use classroom meetings to address concerns about instructional matters and personal behavior.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE

- Find a partner across the room
- TALK about what you want to use of Alfie's theories in your own classroom philosophy. If you don't care to use any of his theories, then explain why.
- You have 36 seconds
- CIRCLE TIME for quick sharing!

The End



The way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions.

Alfie Kohn
(Unconditional Parenting)

Sources

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