

DEBRA PICKERING: Everyone feels like they're an expert. Education is that way, everyone thinks there's a ---- they're and expert because they went through the system. When I travel on airplanes sometimes someone will plop down next to me on an airplane and say so what do you do and I know if I tell them that I work in education, I work with teachers they're gonna go, "So what do you think the problems are?" And then the whole flight they're gonna tell me their solutions to all the problems in education because everyone's and expert so I usually tell them I sell shoes and then we just stop the conversation and then --- because people really do have many, many, opinions.

As we go through this please feel free to ask questions that you have but also questions you know you're gonna get. You know you say okay I agree with what you just said but here is what ---- you know you hear the voice inside your head, someone is gonna say, yeah but you know what about ---- and how dare you and that kind of thing so please feel free to do that., I'd like this to be very interactive as you proceed.

The major message here is that homework is a strategy, homework is not a requirement. It might be where you work but it is not a requirement. It – homework is not necessary to get student achievement. Uh it is a choice that we make to either assign homework or not assign homework and it again some schools will say yeah but we have a policy, we made a decision in general for everyone. Other schools you go to everyone can decide totally for themselves. But it is a strategy and like any strategy it can have a positive effect or it can have a negative effect.

Now unlike some other strategies the kinds of negative effects of homework when it's done poorly can have is – are much more profound. I mean they're really is a curvilinear relationship, in other words homework you know tends to help achievement and then it starts a sharp decline, when it's abused, when certain kinds of homework and certain situations are used you see a real major decline and we see that in the data in achievement. We also see that in anecdotal and interview kind of things. Harris Cooper is the gentleman who done more looking at the research on homework than anyone in the country and he has you know, stories that really get you, so whoa it can really have a negative effect in the --- on the on the achievement of a student. Not only on the achievement but also on the students general attitudes toward school.

There, there was a group that did a study in Maine to try to find out why kids drop out when they do. And guess what was the number one culprit? The word the kids used, I got behind in my homework. You know, my homework just took me down. And so you say, wait a minute, this is a this is a really critical issue. In some places people say, whoa, don't bring it up here. And everyone we have a faculty meeting that goes on forever. You know we all walk out mad. So you know you have too. Grading issues

and homework issues are not sacred cows. They've got to be discussed because we're in this business to help students.

So we can discuss it. I will try to put a frame around what I recommend here. Some things I'm gonna recommend, I'm recommending because the data tells us this has potential of really helping students. Some things I'll recommend I'll be very clear, it's my opinion, so if you ask a question that just takes my opinion I'll say, I'll answer that, but it's my opinion ----- but it's an opinion based on looking at the research. Now of course I have opinions as a parent. You know there were weekends I hated the whole notion of homework. When all three of your kids have a project due, you know, it makes you a little crazy, right. So you kind of say, ahh I uuu yahhh. Or they come home and they sit down and do the homework and they can't do it. And you start to say, okay this is gonna take all evening you know to get through this, so of course I have parental opinions, but I'll try to make sure that my opinions are coming from you from looking at the research.

Do this real fast, would everyone please raise your right hand and point your index finger, when I count to three point to your table leader, one, two, three. You better join a table. But you're now the leader you know. I was gonna say the new person now coming in. Okay, now this is really important because occasionally I'm gonna actually ask table leaders what's up at your table. Yeah and so you help me bring folks back and --- but you also, you know, cause some questions I want you to hear from others in the room, not just from me okay.

People have real strong opinions about homework. It's really funny, go to Amazon and put in the word homework search and search for books and you will get so many titles, I mean it just defines our culture, it really does. You know it just goes on and on and on. There are funny ones and there are you know advice ones, there are, you know, for young kids, for teenagers, there just, you know it's just all over the place. There are these three books that are, are often referenced when people start talking about homework. The End of Homework was a number of years ago, this was the two people in Maine who did the --- the study on dropouts and they ended up writing a book on homework. The Homework Myth by Alfie Kohn and the subtitle is: *Why Our Kids Get Too Much Of A Bad Thing*. Now if anyone knows Alfie Kohn's work he really hates everything, so he's made a business of that so you always have to take Alfie with a, you know, a context that he has, however Alfie makes really good points. I disagree with a lot of his points especially when he attacked me in the book but ---- but I'm not going to take it personally, I'll try not to. The -- he makes some really good points so I think it is, it's a, it's a perspective that's important.

*The Case Against Homework* is by two ladies, how homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it. They have a website called [stophomework.com](http://stophomework.com)

and they're just fed up, they're angry. Now they have some examples you kind of go well I can understand how they feel that way. My problem with the book is they do not --- they make a lot of statements and cite some data and some things but provide no citations, no bibliography, no citations at all, so I'm like okay, wait, hold on, hold on. So mean people, you know, kind of say what's the fuss about. There are misrepresentations and valid concerns. In *The Case Against Homework* there is page after page of testimonials that sound like this and like this. Now when I read that I said that's interesting and I don't know this study, that's when I went looking for the bibliography and the citation and there was none. So I said, I gotta track it down, so after a lot of searching I did track down the Michigan study that was quoted here is that kids don't have time to socialize, implying heavily, it was because of homework, you know so I kind of said, wait a minutes.

The study is actually --- they're referring to is called *Changing Time for American Youth 1981 to 2003* and in that study it did say studying took 49 minutes on average per day, playing 45 minutes, computer time 25 minutes, and watching TV. I'm sort of thinking, you know, maybe they should of told the whole picture. Maybe it's not homework that's taking time out from socialization maybe it's something else, so I kind of, and I get kind of sideways when people do this. These --- they appeared on the *Today Show* the authors and you know kind of went on and on about 6 to 8 year olds and how many minutes and everyone was saying oh this is terrible, but you know they again referring to 6 to 8 year olds, failed to say on the *Today Show* the number of minutes that were being spent in the studies etc., etc. so you can see the point. Always be careful when people don't give citations or when people just say because homework is good for you or bad for you, either one of those is like you know, based on what uh do you say that.

From Alfie Kohn here is what he says, this is very Kohn like. So if you don't think that kids are suffering all over the country you're either living in an ivory tower or you're bereft of human feelings. When he, when he said that, it's kind of the wait a minute part for me was this, there was a guy named Tom Loveless who reported the statistics when parents were interviewed. So about 89% of parents interviewed, and by the way Kohn knew of this study, said It was about the right amount or too little that was being given.

Now does that mean there is a right amount of too little or do you, that those things don't happen, no you gotta take it seriously if anyone is suffering from homework. There are times I thought this is just the most ridiculous waste of time in the world. It made me very angry. Just beware when people cite things and don't tell you the big picture.

There was a --- Metropolitan Life did a study not long ago, parents said the same thing. Most of them said, you know, it's about the right amount. Now many would

argue that sometimes the parent's don't know, you know, and so there's that's I don't know how good a source that is.

So we're gonna do a couple of things here. We're gonna look at three areas, time and purpose, assignments and feedback, and parent involvement and accountability. I'll make some recommendations but I'm also gonna bring up some concerns and hot buttons and that's what I want you to, to discuss. Do this, will table leaders kind of facilitate, kind of get the opinions about homework out on the table. Let's ask people how do you feel about homework, do you think it's a good idea, bad idea, does your school have trouble with it or does everyone agree? What do you hear, where are you coming from? Just get your opinions out on the table for about 2 minutes, 2 or 3 minutes.

Table leaders, I am just gonna take a volunteer basis. What are some issues or questions that came up? I want to try to address, some of the, you know, key issues. What are the big issues or big questions? Thanks.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Should parents have to be involved with their homework?

DEBRA PICKERING: Should parents have to be involved with homework? And you know I'm going to talk about parent involvement and what that means and you're gonna get a lot of opinions about that. You know some parents can't stop themselves from being involved and some can't make themselves be involved, so you have, you know, both ends of the, of the spectrum that you do and it kinds of – and that depends. But I'm gonna talk about parent involvement as far as what the data says.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The grading of homework.

DEBRA PICKERING: The grading of homework. How should they grade and we're going to --- that's that accountability, how do you figure that in. There is a lot of data about feed back as you know. But as far as giving the grade some of that's gonna be, I'm gonna, I'm gonna tell you how to give the grade but not tell you for sure how much weight it should have because that's an opinion. There are some people who think they are born to teach so that they give kids a lot of homework. And you know they would, they would die on that hill, they would say that's my job. Others would take the opposite position and die on that hill so we'll try to get both of those thank you. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Providing work at the independent vs. instructional level.

DEBRA PICKERING: At the independent vs. instructional level. Say that, oh oh okay I see what you're saying, yeah, I'm a fifth grade teacher so I gave a fifth grade

math homework because that's what I'm supposed to do as opposed to what did the student need. Yeah, gottcha. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What is the definition of homework is it practice or is it assessment?

DEBRA PICKERING: Right, right and we're gonna ---- that one we are gonna answer. That one we are gonna answer. Very nice. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 12:58

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, is it ---- what is the, what is the homework, what is the purpose of homework is actually one of the first things we are going to get. Yes, please?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So many kids have services outside of the  
13:04 and that also interrupts the evening after school for homework,  
13:14 .

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes, yes, sure. Yeah when you talk about students with any kind of special need, there's really interesting conversations that happen. I was told occasionally with my son who had the learning disabilities that he should, he will be given more homework and I needed to spend more time with him, you know, because he needed the extra help. Well yeah, now let me talk about my other two, you know, and let's talk about my life and my attitude. And how tired I sometimes am and I'm really cranky when he can't remember. And you know, so it sort of should, well you're just gonna have to help more they said ---- some said to me. I said that just doesn't work for me. You have to realize he is at school all day and he's not saying oh goodie now I get to work with mom for 2 hours, you know. Some days he would say that, a lot of days not so much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And that even goes with the gifted program  
14:06.

DEBRA PICKERING: The gifted program as well, oh now we have big projects, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Certain kids have to have 24 AR points in addition, now you are gifted you have to have 34 AR points.

DEBRA PICKERING: 30 AR points, just read, read, read, read, if you're gifted, people say, shh, don't tell on me I have more work to do.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you go to a gifted program for a day you have to make up all the work you missed.

DEBRA PICKERING: Oh that's always a good one. When you have to make up or --- the whole formative system will finally get rid of makeup work, because it won't be about work. It'll be about assessing what they learned. The work will be for a purpose not for, points. So we're, yeah, grading issues are gonna change that thank goodness. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I come from a district where we have 40% Mexican population and at home mom and dad don't speak English.

DEBRA PICKERING: Right they are not going to be helping with homework.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right, it's not a level playing field.

DEBRA PICKERING: No. No.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When I was teaching I always felt like okay I give this homework I don't want this to count for a grade because I don't know who did it and the kid who comes in without it his homework I don't know why they didn't do anything there may have been some really good reason.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There're some very good reasons. I talk to a young lady and it was in Phoenix and just outside of Phoenix and she was just a lovely, you know, sophomore I think. And she said I'm just gonna want to be the first one in my family to go to college ---- college and she said but --- I said how are you doing? She says I do okay but I really get hits on grades for not doing all my homework. And I said well okay then why don't you do homework? Well there are two younger siblings in the home and her job when she gets home from school is to take care of them for the entire evening including feeding and to bed and she, you know, said I -- I get to go to the football game tonight and I never get to go but I'm, you know, it's, it's like, oh my gosh, somebody's taking points off because she didn't do her homework even if she passed the assessment. Now that's when we have a moral obligation to deal --- talk about homework. I really think it's a moral imperative by the way. You'll get that in the next couple of hours. To avoid topics like this that could really harm kids, you can't do that as an educator.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The other problem is the 16:20 meeting this morning is a lot of our students, well not a lot, but unfortunately who don't have access to the internet. So you know but the whole, you know we're gonna read during class and then get online.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, yeah, get on line, yes, yes,

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Then I talk to the teachers and they say well they can always go to the library after school. But it's not ---- (16:33.)

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, yeah, I know, I know. I know. Yeah, yeah, I didn't get into that issue this morning, you have to be careful, I told the teach --- the story of the teacher who that worked for all of her kids but you can't transfer that into you know someplace else unless all kids are online and you know you have --- and there are some places who are doing that. They do have a laptop and online at home because the school's are doing that. If we quit wasting --- hmm hmmm --- say this different -- if we quite spend --- spending our money on buying a whole new set of text books that we don't need and spend it on making sure kids have access I think we would be much better off. But that's another opinion. Okay good issues. Somebody that hasn't come up, table, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't **17:21 say this has already been addressed** but is it work that's actually, that they're able to do successfully on there own.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, successfully, yeah, what is the purpose? Kind of --- is, is a critical question, goodness sake and sometimes you will say, well because they have to learn to do homework. No they don't. You know they go --- now I --- you need to know something; I've never been persuaded by an argument that starts with "in real life." Or an argument that starts with "well I'm getting them ready for" --- and then fill in the blank. So you, you know, and so just you think you're get upset you can leave I won't be offended. Let me jump into time and purpose here.

Kind of -- I just put in a learning goal. It could be anything but I put in one that's kind of you know toward the area of practice. Here is one approach to and assignment for homework. Here is a different one. What are the pros and cons of those two approaches, just discuss at your table.

Okay, come back together, thank you. Now which do you think we prefer, "B" of course. When you look at --- people say it's so hard to differentiate, individualize, well yeah it is if you have to do a different assignment --- notice how differentiated this is without any, you know, work from me. I'm just saying look, I want you to spend 15 minutes trying to get better at something --- or 20, or 25, whatever the right amount is, that's not the point, but I say so, you know, if we come in and, you know, what's your name?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jim

DEBRA PICKERING: Jim and?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Chris.

DEBRA PICKERING: Chris. So, you know, say Jim and Chris now have the same amount of homework to do. Now Jim says, well and I can do 50 problems in 15

and you say you can do 2, but you both still have 15 minutes of homework and get better at doing something, we're just fine and now I've differentiated. By the way, if Chris comes in and Joan comes in and they've done two and everyone else has done 2 or 3, come here I want to work with you and see what's slowing you down. Chris you and Judy, I want you and – I want you to work over here I have some problems that kind of bumps it up a little bit, work on these together and then you got --- what's slowing you guys down? You know what's going on? Now I can differentiate. Now I'm not naïve. Could Jim be lying? Jim right, Chris, could --- I do memory strategies too they're not working. Umm could Chris be lying? Actually Chris didn't spend 15 minutes he was playing Nintendo all evening and he did a couple on the bus, I know that. I know he can be lying and if it is chronic, Chris only ever does just a little bit, ----- call home and see what's going on. He could be lying to me; do kids sometime lie now about who did the homework? Yeah, I mean it doesn't solve the problem. By the way could Jim this guy, could he also be lying to me? Yeah. He only did two, his parents did the other 18, you know, or he called --- he got on line with his friends and they each did 5 and sent them to each other. You know, it's called cooperative learning, yeah. It's called study group. We used to call it cheating, we now call it cooperative learning. There are some people --- I mean that's actually an interesting issue because some people say if we all got together and did this that's what you're supposed to do when you get into, you know, study groups. Maybe not just sending the answers to each other but you know what, I'll find out when I assess. I'll find out, it'll be fine and maybe I'll find out that actually you know Jim didn't need to do any others, you know, that was just fine. Maybe I'll just say Jim I don't, know you got 15 done and not a prob --- and then he couldn't do the assessment, what's going on. I'll see patterns over time. You're not trying to catch kids. Here's what I know. If you're at least honest with them, if you're at least honest with them then they're more likely to be honest with you. It doesn't mean they will every time. But you say look I want you to work on this for 15 minutes, will you do that for me? And if you come back and you're struggling, if your parents say no, then just let me know and I know what to do next.

It's called formative assessment and instructional feedback. That's what you're doing and I will tell you we've talked to kids where teachers treat them like this and they will hang in for 15 minutes and a matter of fact they'll often go beyond that. And some parents will say, oh well I'm sorry you sit right at that dining room table till you do them all, I don't care if it takes you 3 hours. You can't control that. You can't control the over zealous parent. What you can do is give the assignments in a reasonable respectful way which is, I'm gonna respect your time. I want you to do this and work on this and if you're struggling let me know. Otherwise I'm going to if I said do all that problems, guess what? Jim had 15 minutes of homework and Chris had an hour and a half. You know what's gonna happen to Chris pretty soon? He is gonna quit doing it. He gonna pretend like he doesn't have homework because I watch kids do that. Pltttt --- I'm not

even going to, you know, I not even going to acknowledge that I have it because you know it's gonna take me all evening and there is that evening shot.

So the time is very important. Here is the research on time you know it's kind of squishy. Harris Cooper, some people use the 10 minute rule; take the grade that they're in, take it times 10 minutes, and that's the right amount of time of homework. So 1<sup>st</sup> graders 10 minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders 20 minutes. By the way that rule, he made it up. Now he made it up based on surveys and interviews it kind of ---- okay I guess that's alright. So don't think that he's somehow decided through research that was the perfect time. He decided based on looking at research and interviewing hundreds and hundreds of teachers to do it.

In elementary there are some studies that show a positive effect on achievement with homework but they're not compelling and the positive long term effects are hard to study so I can't tell you that. See here is what some teachers say, I give 2<sup>nd</sup> graders homework cause I want them to get used to having that evening, you know, scheduling their time and doing their homework. I want them to get that responsibility factor in and get it done, so I don't do it because I think it's going to improve achievement in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade I want them to get good habits in doing that. Well you know what, I don't know if that works or not, it's hard to study. Are they now more likely to do their homework in 8<sup>th</sup> grade if their 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher gave them homework? We can't determine that, too many other variables that are, that are in their. So that's just kind of an opinion.

Secondary 1 to 2 hours per night, more can have a negative effect. It wouldn't for every student, but there are quite a number of studies when you get over 1 to 2 hours in secondary it starts to have a declining effect on achievement for a whole list of reasons. You know, kids you know quit, shut down, they don't do as well, they start to cheat because as ---- they are there for such a long time it's like okay I gotta get someone to help me here cause it's taking me such a long time, I'm exhausted, you know I didn't learn as much because I just was plowing through getting it done. All those real human reasons are the reasons. So 1 to 2 hours, not 1 to 2 hours per class, 1 to 2 hours per student.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I mean I guess you would have to have an understanding among the faculty.....

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: -----I don't know any other way to do it other than to divide up per se per class.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah some schools have tried to start ---- there was a school board that mandated the 2 hours and the kids could do no more than 2 hours. The secondary said, but how do we know? And the school board said talk to each other

come up with a plan would be really good. Things like --- now this isn't perfect, nothings perfect, math and science gets Monday and Tuesday, language arts and social studies gets you know, Tuesday and Thursday and block scheduling kind of affects those kind of things but that's what they're saying. Also if you give kids windows of time and instead of just do it all in one night. Now some people who teach AP look at that and go plttttt yeah right, they've gotta do 4 or 5 hours of homework and all of these, you know yes and no. We could see instances where the teachers who teach AP do not give hours and hours of homework and their kids ---- pass rate on the test is just fine. So it kind of depends on the situation, condition, and it shouldn't be a given. If you're gonna take AP you're gonna have 5 or 6 hours of homework. Many places it is and the kids are willing to do it. Now does it have a positive effect? Jury is starting to be a little questionable on the positive effects of AP so that remains to be seen. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the other side of that I find that special needs students have reading disabilities so 1 or 2 hours is not going to look the same as it does where with 1 or 2 hours \_\_\_\_\_ (27:21).

DEBRA PICKERING: Right, right and it ---- see

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What we have to get into the teacher's mind is okay what \_\_\_\_\_ (27:36).

DEBRA PICKERING: Yep. Yeah and the thing is I gave you a math example before but now let me give you a reading example. So a language arts teacher raise their hand and say okay I understand, you're recommendation, let me finish this and I'll go back to that, 1 to 2 hours per night according to Cooper after that the benefit is decreased, 7 to 12 hours per week produced the largest effect size, the positive effect after that so there's several people who say the 1 to 2 hours in there. 12 graders the optimum amount of homework might lay between 1 ½ and 2 ½ but there's no hard and fast rule but you can see the range. So study after study after study kept coming back to that.

Now the recommendations for policy is this. Put time constraints on when you assign homework. So you say just like I did with the second example I said I want you to practice this for 15 minutes. Now what you said is somebody who ---- lets say they have reading processing problems, or they have just pace of reading problems, that kind of thing. Well it's a little harder for language arts people to wrap their heads around how you do this. Cause they said to me what if you want them to read 5 chapters of the novel? Well one kid is gonna take what an hour to read 5 chapters another kid is gonna take him what yeah, long time to read it. They go so Debra, language arts teachers we can't adhere to this. What's the answer to that? Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What is the skill that you are trying to \_\_\_\_\_ (29:14).

DEBRA PICKERIN: Thank you, thank you. It's like --- yeah listen I've had the most contentious arguments with secondary language arts people then anyone else. I mean I got scars from that. They go after me big time, well I was a secondary language arts, yeah, yeah, right here, go ahead. I was a secondary language arts teacher so I'm willing --- I say okay we'll go toe to toe on this one. They have to read 5 chapters of Huckleberry Finn. I said well what's the learning goal? They said it's ---- they have to read 5 chapters of Huckleberry Finn, nobody needs to read 5 chapters of Huckleberry Finn. I'm looking at your curriculum here and nowhere does it say every kid needs to read every work of Huckleberry Finn. What are you working on? Well how are they gonna do any of the assignments if they haven't read it. What's your learning goal? If your learning goal is to understand how character traits surface through story you don't have to read Huckleberry Finn to do that. So you know you have to kind of have those conversations about what's the learning goal, what's the learning goal, what's the learning goal, if they need to read that much. Well I'm sorry they don't need to. Now you can imagine that that gets very lively but you have to go back to your curriculum document and say here is the curriculum document. You tell me that a kid is not gonna understand the relationship between plot and character unless they read Huckleberry Finn. I'm saying to you, you've just denied this curriculum to a bunch of kids. Some of them can't read Huckleberry Finn some of them won't, that would include me, I hate Huckleberry Finn, I have never read it and I was a secondary language arts teacher and I did fine by the way and it's like, what's going on? I hate dialect, that's why, I can't read dialect it just makes me crazy and so you know ---- so they're ---- so to be continued from there.

Now I'm not suggesting you always get into a fight with people but I think you have to at least come back with, what's the learning goal, what's the learning goal, what's the learning goal as a mantra and if you can't tell me what the learning goal is and if the learning goal is about Huckleberry Finn we got a problem. Because for one thing you've just insulted a bunch of kids because they're saying, plttt, I can't do this because I can't or won't be reading you know all of the chapters and now I feel stupid. This is the situation that my son got into when he came home and said they think I'm stupid. Because he had to kind of say, I am not gonna be able to read all those chapters. Could he speak --- could he talk about issues at a very high level of abstraction and critical thinking, oh yes. But he wasn't going to be reading Huckleberry Finn to do it so I said there is another way we can do it. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was going to say, you know, if that is the \_\_\_\_\_  
(31:59).

DEBRA PICKERING: Say it again, I'm sorry.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If they put it on an MP3 player and have the kids

(32:02).

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes. Yeah and some of the times they can at least put it on --- sometimes it takes a long time but they can at least listen to it. But if I say they just need to kind of know, you know, about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn well show the movie, you know. And they ---- I said why do they read *Romeo and Juliet*? Because everyone has to. I said no they don't. Show the movie. They really hate me. I say no I'm not saying never have they read classics. Of course you have em read classics. Of course you expose em to classics. Just because they can't read it from cover to cover doesn't mean you don't expose it. When my son started ---- got ready for his senior year in high school he told me in the middle of the summer, I'm not going back you know. I said excuse me. He said I looked it up you can't make me; you know you can't make me go back. I said good research bad attitude. Now why aren't you going back? Because they just treat me like ---- so he actually finished his senior year on line thank goodness we had that available to us.

One thing I petitioned the school, I said here's what I want to do. He can read fine, he can't read the classics and the processing that it takes and all that. So I said I want to buy the movies on DVD of all the classics in literature. There are beautiful movies done of a Tale of Two Cities, Huckleberry Finn, The Crucible, Scarlet Letter, Great Expectations. I want him to watch all of those and I'm just gonna talk to him about the story. And they ---- I said here's why. I want him to be exposed to for just a general understanding of those pieces of literature so that when there are allusions to those he will know. It does not deny him ---- does not tell him he can't read but there are certain things that he can't read in the time ---- and he know that. I got my payoff by the way. Last summer he and I were having a conversation and there was a family we know and the woman had had a baby when she was a teenager and had given the baby up for adoption. And he didn't understand why this woman would not tell her family now that that had happened to her as a teenager. And he said why doesn't she just tell them? And I said and I tried to explain reasons and finally he turned to me and he said, he said, what does she think she was gonna have to wear the scarlet letter. Yes. See that's what I want. I want to know that, that they're exposed to certain things that an educated person --- I mean he can take all that in and he can think at those levels so don't deny access to that kind of thinking.

If you go back to your curriculum you're fine because it says they understand literature and its effect on society's language today. Yeah?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Don't you find that the biggest stumbling block in working with teachers is getting them to define that clarity or having an understanding and once

that's accomplished then it's pretty much down hill. But until you can overcome that barrier it's next to impossible.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes, Yes. Yes. And I feel your pain. And we're doing everything we can to try to come back and say what's the learning goal, what's the learning goal, and my message to every single audience when I do the learning goal piece is do not talk to the folks that are supporting your kids with special needs in the resource room. Do not talk to them about the assignments talk to them about the learning goals. Because you have kids doing assignments that are not worth doing and they're not learning what they need to learn so be clear about the learning goal. It makes me sad to go to a resource room and have teachers helping kids do assignments that nobody needs to do. Like make the family tree. You don't need to do that. And cutting things out and putting it together, no. What's the learning goal, what's the learning goal? So if we keep saying it I think people are getting a little more attuned to it and ---- keep --- many a high percentage of kids in resource room, any kind of identified learning disability, a high percentage can achieve all the curriculum goals. They just can't do it with those assignments. So we gotta make sure we are talking about the learning goals, so just fight the good fight is the message there okay.

Also putting time constraints on it is really important. Now some people say well what if it's gonna take kids more time? Then you give them more time at school. You don't say because you struggle we've taken away your time in the evening as well. You just have to rearrange the time in school.

Second thing, the students need to understand and focus on the learning goals for the homework. We've kind of done this one. Avoid assigning homework as a matter of routine is the message we give. Don't assign homework because it's Monday. Homework will be assigned Monday through Thursday, I hate those policies. I hate them. Homework will be assigned when additional study and preparation is needed, now this is over simplification but there are many teachers who do the second. Some say if it's Tuesday you gotta have homework. Others say we have homework when there is a need and it's a clear need and to the extent that I can I'm going to honor the needs that you have that are different from the needs that you have. And if we are in a formative system we will get there. Now some people disagree with that. Just react to that. Do you think there should be a policy that homework you should say the days ahead of time? That homework --- what would be the pros and cons of doing that as opposed to the policy at the school is, teachers decide when homework is needed and then assign homework, not a policy of Monday through Thursday. Just talk at your table for a second. What's your reaction? People have different opinions on that.

What are the pros and cons of saying Monday through Thursday we'll have homework or some go beyond that and say and every weekend and through the

holidays and you know all of that as well. What are the pros and cons of having a set policy? Are you for it or agin it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (37:55)

DEBRA PICKERING: Go ahead, Joan.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (38:03.)

DEBRA PICKERING: That's alright, that's okay. Working memory run away now we got you back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We didn't so much discuss specifically whether it should be Monday through Thursday. We did have a great conversation about ....

DEBRA PICKERING: Having a policy.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right and also about the need for doing some additional work at home and the need for being able to do --- developing skills to structure that so, and time management and so forth.

DEBRA PICKERING: Time management, how to structure, how you need to do additional work at home and all of that. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We had that conversation and we also spoke about that we like the fact of knowing when we're not going to have homework; like if you don't have it over weekends or you don't have it over winter break.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, yeah, I mean the --- some policies

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Knowing when you have it is helpful. (38:49)

DEBRA PICKERING: Right, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And again it's how policy is shared by all the faculty cause if it's we're gonna have homework Monday through Thursday it becomes factory routine meaningless to everyone and then it's homework that just goes in a basket and there is no feedback rather than meaningful .....

DEBRA PICKERING: Right because trying to keep up with feedback on all of those is just ---- is you know, is just overwhelming. And sometimes takes so much class time so we kind of waste some time there. The reason we say is that you don't need ---- don't do it routinely. That's when you get silly homework. That's when you get busy work. That's when you get oh gosh here's your homework real quick tonight and do that. Don't go there. Now a teacher might be a teacher who assigns homework frequently but the policy doesn't say ----- that teacher shouldn't say, Monday through

Thursday you'll have homework. Now the other kind of the policy that you're gonna have is wait a minute do we all decide whether there should be homework over the winter break or over the spring break or is that individual teacher. Now that's just a philosophical decision.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just think when you go directly to policy and those of you that have to work directly with school boards, you probably feel the pain, because that often times becomes a negotiation. And what the final product is, is sometimes often skewed and you know you have to be able to define it just like my comment about the clarity. What is it, what's its purpose? And then how do you negotiate that? Because then it becomes a point of contention like a collective bargaining agreement that well you violated this so I'm gonna file a grievance against you.

DEBRA PICKERING: Right that's when school becomes dysfunctional.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right.

DEBRA PICKERING: And it's not in tuned to, in tuned to what kids need. Because kids do not need homework every night. You know, we know that. It can have some benefits but you know for a lot of kids it doesn't help at all. So we've got to be very clear about the ---- about the purpose and the conversations and I'm sorry if you have a conversation that says no we all have to do it and you have to give homework every night. That takes ---- that takes away the roll of the teacher as the one who decides what is going to --- who needs what when.

Now some people say well is that true for reading? No you could say kids I want you to you read every night. Every night, that's not homework you gotta do this and bring it back in. Every night, but be careful, then people say that's why I have them do reading logs. I hated as a parent reading logs, because you know, my son you don't know which one would bring me the sheet all filled out where all the 20 minutes ---- Wednesday, Mon ---- he read for 20 minutes, and I'm looking at it and I go you didn't read for 20 minutes on Wednesday. Yes I did you didn't see me I was down in the basement and ---- na na na ---- I said no you weren't you were ----- yes I did ai yi yi --- I said fine sign it, you know. The thing is because we read a lot at home I felt I would just sign it. I don't know if he read 20 minutes Wednesday night but I know we read every night you know when they go to bed and you know so I'm not gonna worry about it and those are one of one of the things that kills reading. It's like AR points, ohhh you gotta have 30 AR ---- why? That's because --- Kohn is right you can kill the love of reading with these ways. I would do everything possible that I possibly could do to turn kids onto reading. I mean every single strategy that I know to turn kids onto reading, absolutely. But you just got to be careful about this routine thing. Now should kids have homework on holiday, you know, and all that. That's philosophical. I mean I have an

opinion, I say no, but ---- or should kids have you have to read books before the year starts you know and do all those things. I was like, you know, for me it's like leave them alone because it's now about the assignment instead of the learning. Well I have to read these because we're gonna have a test on day one of school. Well then it's not about teaching. It's about compliance so we have a problem. So when you look ----- talk to expert teachers, actually the surveys not everyone, say that teachers do not like these routine ---- these policy routines. That they would ---- they rather --- would rather talk to their students about I am here to make sure you learn, we'll decide together what you need as far as home. So expert teachers say they don't like those policy those routines that have to be ---- that you have to give homework Monday through Thursday.

In The Case Against Homework here are some examples that I took and adapted from them, sorry, read them through please and tell me what you think is the problem that the author has had with these homework assignments.

So what's your problem with them? These are some of the examples that they had in, you know, those various books. I always read em and go okay I get their problem. What's the problem? Some of them do feel like punishment but not who's being punished. Some of them they said might just be fine but what's the learning goal? What's the learning goal, what's the learning goal? I mean that is a mantra we have to have.

Here is a recommendation I make to all schools. If you have an assignment notebook, never just tell the kids here's the assignment and the due date. Give them the assignment, the due date, and the learning goal. Every teacher, anyone who signs homework has got to state the learning goal. So that we can then look later and say was this a learning goal that was worth the time of taking away their personal time. And many times those assignments might be just fine given the learning goal but when you don't know what the learning goal is it feels like the assignment. It feels like it's a hoop to jump through. So if you say to kids I'm assigning this because I want you to know more about something, I want you to understand something better, be more skilled at something, then I'm telling them I am out --- looking out for their learning. Now whether it's the right assignment or not is still a question but at least the teacher is saying that. I'm not just assigning you homework because it's Tuesday, I'm assigning you homework because I want you to learn that. So just be clear.

I was working with some middle school teachers and a couple of them were doing this, they had their notebooks set up like this and they said it's wonderful when they assign homework and they don't give the learning goal and some student raises their hand and says what's the learning goal? That's music to your ears for a kid to say that. Now mind you they were just filling out the assignment notebook but at least were talking about learning. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just want to say my son doesn't even write down the assignment let alone 45:22

DEBRA PICKERING: I know I know. I know they we're all challenged with that but you know what, they actually said that some of the interactions changed when they said cause I want you to learn this. It just felt better than, I'm gonna take your time, I'm in control of you after school as well as school and you may have a son like mine who that's the part he resented is that okay you can control me this 6 ½ hours but then leave me alone. And you know whether that's a good or bad attitude remains to be seen. He is still kind of that way by the way. The jobs he looks for he cannot go for a job where you know they write him up for breaking the rules. He said I'm not doing that, you know if I get the job done that's the job that I want and there's plenty of jobs like that. You get the job done you get it done well and you're okay. Not what you didn't ----- you know, you wore your pants too low or something like that.

So we want to make sure that students need to understand and focus on the learning goals for the homework. So the time and purpose is really pretty simple. Put time constraints on it. By the way the Met Life survey said parent's did say teachers are notoriously wrong about how much time it's gonna take to do something. I mean they were really a lot of parents said that. And it wasn't even a resentful thing it's just they just --- this should take you about 30 minutes ---- going no, no, no, no, no, it takes more than that. So if you put time constraints on it and you are wrong at least you haven't you know beaten them up if you've said and if this takes you more than 30 minutes something's wrong don't do that. Come back and we'll figure out what's wrong. So that's a very honest communication the teacher has with students as opposed to a controlled conversation. Okay. So that's kind of the first section.

Let's go to assignments themselves and the feedback on those assignments. This is sort of a different way to say homework should be designed not just assigned and that, you know, trying to get a little poetry there maybe I don't know. But what we're saying is when you get ready to assign homework you have to say what is the learning goal and what is the best assignment for that? As opposed to oh here's a sheet that's your homework tonight. Just say wait a minute, the teach --- it's cueing the teacher to think through what is the best use of time? Because we get some silly assignments, this is where all three of those books I showed you, especially the people who have the stophomework.com have a valid point. Because they give you some of those things and go, oh why, oh why, oh why? This wasn't designed; it was done because it's always been done. There are certain things that come up in certain areas of the country. In San Antonio I was just there and the kids at a certain grade all get the Alamo project. They have to do a model of the you know --- in Wisconsin it's the leaf/Leif project 7:31, California it's the Mission project. It's in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, the kids all have to build a model of the mission. I mean it's so famous the that you know the sitcom,

*The New Adventures of Old Christine* they did a whole show on her child having to do the Mission project and the mothers in the school would not give her the name of the guy who does everybody's Mission project. So Christine made her son do his own Mission project and he had this pathetic looking thing compared to these works of art. By the way, you can buy Mission projects on EBay. Now these are home projects, they don't do them at school and you kind of think there are whole industries that get built on this. You can make, you know if we quit doing these the economy would go bust. Because there are whole you know, online you know, buy the solar system kit. I just saw on that if Pluto is still in the solar system kit it's on discount. Cause they're not gonna open all of them and take Pluto out.

So yeah it probably looks like I'm picking on elementary school. Hang on. Maybe you've heard of this. Some people usually have. In high school chemistry there is a term that is taught called the mole and kids --- which is a word for  $6.02 \times 10^{23}$ . So October 23<sup>rd</sup> is mole day. Actually the whole week is mole week, it's cute, it's fine. Pi day is March 14<sup>th</sup> yeah that's fine. But this takes it way over to a new homework assignment. Here's one of the homework assignments that is commonly given in this country. The kids have to make a mole from the pattern given. Now there's the pattern. I want you to notice something, we've left chemistry. This is the animal the mole, and they have to cut it out of fabric, sew it, stuff it, sew on the toes and the nose, put it in a costume and I a diorama with a play on the word mole. Like guacamole. The reason I found out about the assignment is because it came home to my house and I said, excuse me. You have to do what? This is the stupidest thing I've ---- I know that wasn't good for me to say but she's my good student. She said, I (squealing) I said okay, okay, okay, fine. Go work on your calculus I'll do the stupid mole. So I did a mole in one. Okay. I did get an "A" I think you should know. I can't tell you how many mothers I've heard who have done the mole project.

I'm spitting nails saying this is home time. This is a homework assignment obviously not at school and what a ridiculous waste of time. This is the silliest --- it has nothing to do with chemistry. I had a high school chemistry teacher say, yeah but it was the first time the kids were excited about high school chemistry. Do you see the problem in that statement? I said you've got to be kidding me. So I went online and some kids actually were saying I love my little mole it's just so cute. You know others said a lot, said, I'm not doing this, this is, this is just ridicu --- this is just insane. I'm not doing it, I'm not doing --- parents on blogs, would someone please tell me what's going on in the school, they have to --- you know, so then I thought I was being a curmudgeon I was just gonna lighten up a little bit and so okay I'll just do it. I was making a mountain out of a mole hill. Sorry I can't stop myself from saying that. Then I saw some pictures of, too late for me, but some mole day projects. This is like *Finding Nemole*, *Third Party Animole*, *Marilyn Molerero*, *Moliver Twist*, *Moleson Twins*, *Molehamed Ali*,

*Moleopoly, Molena Lisa, Games of the 28<sup>th</sup> Molelympiad, Cirque du Molei, Moleby Dick, Remember the Alamole, Mole Train, and Moletov Cocktail*, yeah this kid was followed for the next two weeks I guarantee it.

Yeah I just --- you know I'm not against creativity, I'm not, I think it's great. But there are a lot of places this is one of the chemistry grades. There are --- one --- several places I read, you could take your grade on the mole and use it to replace any chemistry test. So if you failed a chemistry test but you got an "A" on the mole just say okay you know forget that. I don't know.

You don't have to abandon the learning goals to be creative, there are really many creative things you can do. I love these books for this guy Joe Schwarcz who make chemistry fun, he talks about all kinds of things like why do socks stink? And you know why do Oreo cookies not crumble in milk and what's the chemistry behind you know --- that kind of thing. It's very --- they're very clever, very clever. So I'm not against having fun but come on. I mean when you look at the list of projects --- when someone was doing a list of projects for um, what was the *Lord of the Flies* and the kids could choose, they could do a collage, you know of what it would be like on *Lord of the Flies*, or write a different ending and write in the style of William Golding you know. It's like, I'm a kid, I go home, what am I gonna do? I can write like William Golding or make a collage. What should I do? Make a collage, yeah. I say what is that? So I think we have to, to use these conversations to have collegial conversations about what's worth doing. And everyone is got to be collegial enough to say, why again are you having them do that? I've had people beat me up for exposing the mole project and you don't like that --- oh they just have fun --- you don't.... I said stop it, go online, just listen it to what there are saying. It's like, no that one project is not going to kill them but now multiply that times a whole bunch and now you've got ---- what are we doing here except getting points in school? So what we talk about projects by the way, I always crack up when I hear some of these. You know something is wrong when you hear a kid say I'm sorry I can't come out and play right now I have to help my dad with my science project. Or mom you got an "A". I've heard that, you know fairly frequently. Or hello *Jones Crafts* do you have Styrofoam balls in the shapes and sizes of all the planets, here is the key question, how late are you open? Or a parent who says here's my volcano son, it was your grandfathers too, he would be proud and it's a guaranteed "A".

So of course I'm making a point, you know, just beating things up a little bit. But homework should be designed to enhance the learning of an essential learning goals. Don't say I know the learning goal and it's, you know, ---- say okay the homework is they're supposed to memorize all these capitals ---- well first of all somebody just say, is that an important learning goal? Now you might say yes, so okay but make sure somebody asks the questions. Make sure somebody asks is it that important for them

to know this, you know how many different you know, do you, do we really have to write our name in cuneiform or hieroglyphics and color it. I don't --- you say well they --- you know there learning goal is to know hieroglyphics alphabet or whatever, you know, come on. Is that essential learning goal? I think someone needs to challenge that. They need to color the maps. Well is that the best learning goal for --- is that the best activity for your learning goal. So you got have that conversation. We've all done it, if anybody in here says you've never given an assignment that's not worth it, you're in deep denial. We've all done it. I have. I think some of the projects and go oh I'm sorry, I would like to ---- do you ever want to call up the kids you taught your 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year and say I'm really sorry. Come back we'll go over that again a little differently.

So you just, just get better and just have conversations with your colleagues is what this whole thing is all about. Homework assignments should be appropriate for the learning goal being addressed. So preparation/elaboration, and practice are two major things. So you say what is the purpose of the learning goal and you said is it practice or is it assessment? I'm gonna – the short answer is it never should be used as an assessment and I'll revisit that in a minute. Never should be used as an assessment. It should not be used as a score to tell you whether they have achieved the learning goal. It is preparation, some elaboration to get the thinking going, or its practice. Those are the purposes of homework.

So when you have terms and details and organizing ideas and you want to increase students understanding, sometimes it's preparation/elaboration. It might be I want you to read this and be able to start talking about you know this as we get into a new unit. When a skill is in processes often it's practice. It could also be a challenging context so they understand the skill better but the homework the major thing we're going after is preparation/elaboration and practice. So I'm starting my mythology unit tomorrow, I want you to generate on this graphic organizer what you know about the gods, the three gods I give you and I'm gonna fill in some and see what you could do. Can you see I'm just kind of get their minds and get their prior knowledge out. Or we were talking about you know some possible weakness of these gods could you think of some others tonight and be ready to start there tomorrow. Not go home and learn it. It is preparation or elaboration.

The other thing is practice. Massed and distributed practice. When you learn a new skill you need to do short practices several times in a row. Then space them out a little bit. That's the purpose of homework. It can really help kids get the skill in their heads so they would know it in a year. You see in order for a, for a skill to actually be internalized you have to have massed and distributed practice so several days in a row, wait, then a week out, then two weeks out when other things are going on then it keeps coming back. That way kids will maybe know that in a year. So those are the things we need to understand.

Another thing, elaboration, are you familiar with Cornell notes? It's kind of the format I use for the handout here. Where kids put class notes in one side and then on the other side usually a smaller column they have questions or nonlinguistic representations or cues or reminders. One of the things that I know that --- then they have to do a page summary. I know several teachers, this is very effective. Kids take notes in class, and um they take notes over here. Their homework often is this part right here. Take your notes and kind of generate some cues or questions, generate the summary, see what you said, there is a teacher that's very, very, well respected at a high school. I was talking to the kids and they talked about him with such glowing terms. I said tell me how he deals with homework. They say we take our notes and every night we just know what our homework is. It's to go over the left hand column fill that out, at the bottom and when he starts class the next day he is saying when you were doing that last night what questions or confusions were you --- because what happens kids look at their notes and go whoa, I don't remember even writing this. What was going on? They clear up confusions, he asks a few kind of questions about it and then they move on.

You mean it's just, it's just elaboration. It's just going a little further with what you learned. And it takes kids about 10 or 15 minutes they said. It's fine. You're ready for class the next day and it just sets you up for success. So the homework is this left hand column. So an example might be on the right hand side there are some math problems that he has done or some notes given and again the summary page --- part and then the kind of questions and little brief statements and terms on the left hand side. This is elaboration. So preparation/elaboration and then practice are the others.

Finally feedback should be timely and specific enough to help students understand the extent to which their work contributed to the achievement of clearly identified learning goals. We know this about feedback, feedback, feedback, feedback. Now this is kind of a tough one sometimes. Feedback can come in all kinds of different ways, whole class, small group, one on one, correct answer sample, oral, written, there's just somehow the student needs to know how they did on the homework. Let me skip this I might come back to this.

When we talk about giving homework in a timely manner that means if I did homework on Monday and it's due Tuesday I need to get feedback right then. I need to get feedback about how I'm doing on that. And that again sometimes is difficult but you could do it in small groups or whatever. What are some of the other challenges of getting the kids timely feedback on their homework? Just discuss that at your table for a second. What do you see is the other challenges of making sure --- cause it's easy for me to say kids need home ---- feedback as soon as possible to see if they're getting --- if there are correct. If they're moving in the right direction. What are some of the challenges for teachers to make sure this happens just share at your table for a second.

Let's talk about some of the challenges of, of, of make sure that kids get feedback on their homework. Table leaders give me one; give me one, thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Time.

DEBRA PICKERING: The time. Say more about that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well you know I have 130 students between 6 classes.

DEBRA PICKERING: You have 139 students, over 6 classes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And so if I'm collecting homework which I rarely do...

DEBRA PICKERING: If you collect homework? Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If I collect it the ability to look at all 130 students ...

DEBRA PICKERING: 130 students. Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Specifically like that's student is lacking and be able to I you know provide direction for that specific student, I mean there is...

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, Yeah, you can't do it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a 42 minutes prep period ----- softball, baseball-----.

DEBRA PICKERING: Right and you have a life hopefully besides --- you try. But if you're trying to come back and do homework there are certain --- if you want to take them and grade them and give them back later, here is, here is the key. If you have to wait for I don't know a week before they get em all back. Just know this. It's not going to be a very powerful learning experience for a lot of students. Just know that. Now here is the, the logical conclusion. If I can't get the papers back to them in a timely way and know what they needed. What should I therefore maybe consider?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (1:04:18)

DEBRA PICKERING: You have to change the assignment you say don't collect it very often. I think when you know collecting it and giving it back --- if you know that's not gonna be a good learning experience then we can't take their time from them and to do it. Now there is another --- I'm sure you do it other ways too. That's where kids interact in small groups. That's where you provide kids even something like read this paragraph up on the screen and compare it to the paragraph you have and be able to tell me randomly when I call on you to say what are the, what are the things you need to work on and fill out what you need to work on. They're all those ways to do it. If it's --- if you're determined to collect homework and some teachers are, determined to collect it,

grade it, and give it back and several days pass just know you have missed a big learning opportunity and you've worked really hard --- in taking your own time.

What are other challenges? Providing feedback. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This isn't a challenge but I think that ....

DEBRA PICKERING: Hold on just a second. We're gonna give you a mic. Because there are some other people watching.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just think a piece that we're missing under policy is that we're not teaching kids that homework is a time for reflection. It's like the concept of ownership. We own the content; we own what we're teaching. If we can get kids to realize that, even if they take 5 minutes to think about what they learned in science today. Did they get it, did they not get it? What questions do they have? What questions do they need answered. I just --- I think we're missing a big piece there as far as give --- empowering kids to take ownership of that.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes, yes. Okay continue this conversation with me. I'm gonna be --- I'm not gonna believe necessarily what I am saying but let's continue the conversation. That's *Pollyanna* a lot of kids if I just say go over and look at what you've learned and what you didn't learn they're not gonna do it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right. I agree with you.

DEBRA PICKERING: The only way is I, is I have to give em an assignment and they have to --- and I have to put it in the grade book or won't do it. What's your answer to that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well like I was saying we have a teacher in our school this year that started something new with homework. She assigns homework well aware that some students don't do it just because ....

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah. Let's acknowledge that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She acknowledges that. When they come in, in the morning they have --- they, she has a sign up. Make your decision, you either go to the right side, you did your homework, you felt pretty good about it. She has the answer keys there and they self correct their homework, correct errors or whatever and then they move on to some challenge thing. Okay if you go to the left side of the room she is there with a little mini lesson, she ---- the kids did not feel good about what they did, they got home and realized they didn't get it, she's just seeing such a change in kids ...

DEBRA PICKERING: Alright let me continue, but I'm gonna have some kids that are always gonna be on the left side of the room.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But she said at least they're at least they're getting some additional practice.

DEBRA PICKERING: Thank you. Thank you. Because there – you only control what you could control. What I can control is --- I'm sorry if you didn't do the homework you don't get to learn that --- that's just malpractice. What you have to say is ---

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What am I gonna do about it.

DEBRA PICKERING: After awhile I might notice that Joan's always in the group that didn't get it, there might be a pattern that I want to you know call home and say if there something going on or you know sit down with Joan, what's going on? And Joan says I never understand a thing you say. I say well maybe if you would quit you know texting during --- that would be better. So we can have that conversation but see what you described is a very honest communication with kids. I want you to give it a shot and I'm here for you if it didn't work for you. So I'm good to go. Very nice. Thank you for sharing that. That, that's --- and I bet that teacher if that teacher were here would say, I think I interrupted you, you said, she said she is starting to see a difference. What is she seeing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well she is seeing kids see the reason for doing the homework more.

DEBRA PICKERING: Kids see the reason for doing the homework more because she is

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And they are trying to get to the right side of the room.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah she is not saying you're the bad kids and you're the good kids and you get to just play games and go out to extra recess, you guys don't get recess. You know so it's a punishment – no it's like I'm here cause I want you to learn this.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: She has one boy who said to her in that conversation about why do you never do your homework? He said I don't get it you talk too fast...

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah the one boy said to her you talk too fast, that's why I don't do it. I so get that and what you can say then as a teacher say let's figure out how we can help. I'm going to put a little I-Touch in my pocket and record everything and put it on mine and you are going to be able to see it or you're gonna sit with someone, or I'm going to provide you the notes, so that I don't want to spend time writing notes I want you to spend time, you know, actually listening to it. Someone will say, "Well that's not fair!" Goh, guh, stop it! Sorry?

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

DEBRA PICKERING: She could reflect him to slow down especially if she gets feedback a lot. For some of us it's really hard to slow down, that would be me. Yeah. That kind of reminds me of this, a lot of times this conversation comes up, what about homework packets? So, read this. Now, I think you're trying to say, the teachers who do this, are trying to say, "Look, I know some evenings are busier than other evenings, so I'm gonna give you this whole packet to do." What's the problem with this?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Time management.

DEBRA PICKERING: Time management, but also less of the parents do that. The feedback's gonna come way too faraway. I mean the feedback for what they did on Monday and Tuesday probably is not going to come until a week later, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I get this from my own kids for spelling tests and if they already got 100% on their spelling test, why are we doing this?

DEBRA PICKERING: Why are we doing the spelling packet?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How do we get the feedback on how well they really do. When they take the test, 1:10:27

DEBRA PICKERING: Right! So the feedback on the spelling packet was the test, but they already got the words so now we can say that this list doesn't make any sense, their right! It's just that we have to have those conversations among colleagues and say, stop it! It's not okay to do stuff like that. You could actually do it this way.

So, what this says is okay you have a packet. So that you can, cause Wednesday nights you have church and soccer practice and piano lessons and game night with grandma and grandpa, you now, so I get that. So I'm going give you the packet; however, you need to know that the morning after that day's assignment you're going to get feedback on it. So at least I can try to get it closer to the actual act and really homework is done for preparation or elaboration or practice this probably won't even come up that much, but at least you can help students schedule themselves a little bit, okay? Does that make some sense? So, some of these things work better in the name of feedback. Try to get the feedback to them back as soon as possible.

Let's talk about accountability and parent involvement. We'll do this piece and I'm gonna kind of pause and let you so decide what are the issues would actually address in a policy if you were king or queen for the day, okay? So you get to be in charge. Let's talk about accountability and parent involvement. Here is a valid concern. Parents might use homework as a vehicle for teaching responsibility, but don't count on

it. When people say this, "I am assigning homework to teach them responsibility." My question is, "Where is your lesson plan for teaching responsibility? I want to see it. I want to see what you do in the classroom to teach responsibility." Don't think that assigning homework and having really, really high stakes attached to it is teaching responsibility. What happens, they're exceptions, in the case studies, what you see happens is that there are some parents who teach responsibility, at home and use homework as a way of doing it. So, you know I say I'm going to help you with your homework, you know, go out and run around for a half hour then come back and do the hard stuff first, take a break, I'll get you a snack, you know, I know you get frustrated, how you gonna work it through. So I'm teaching you how to deal with stuff, right? Many parents do that with their kids. What if they're going to a home where no one is doing that. No one's doing that. And you say, "Well that's just too bad and they gotta learn to figu... "Oh stop it!" I mean that is just mean! You say, "Look, if you want to teach responsibility, teach responsibility. I get that." And then say, "Here see, I can tell you. How do I get myself to do things I don't want to do?" You know, and I can share some strategies with them. Everyone in here could share a strategy with the kid and many kids don't even know there are strategies to talking yourself into doing something you don't want to do. They just thought either sometimes you're motivated, sometimes you're not. No! It's strategies. How do you talk to yourself? Tell the person next to you. When you don't want to do something in an evening how do you get yourself to do it? What's your strategy? What's your trick? Tell the person next to you. What's one thing that you do to get yourself to do something in the evening that you just don't want to do? What's your trick?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:14:05

DEBRA PICKERING: You start picturing real clearly in your head. What's going to happen if I don't do this? You know, that sometimes works. What else? A different strategy, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:14:19

DEBRA PICKERING: When it's done. I always set myself up a reward, okay. It's Thursday night. If I go and do this. That means at 9:00 o'clock I'm gonna pour a glass of wine and watch Grey's Anatomy, you know, and so I'm good. So you just little reward you're going to give yourself if you do it and then say, "If I don't I'm gonna have to work all the way through Grey's Anatomy and I'm not going to watch it or American Idol or whatever your choices for doing that." What else? What do you do to get yourself to do something that you don't want to do? Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:15:53

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah! You look at, you kind of picture in your head, how good it's going to feel when that is done. What else?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You have to talk about something similar to that and when you talk about having a list and feeling happy about crossing it off.

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah! When you have this list and you go nee nah, nuh, noo and it is just is great. It feels so good.

Now! This little conversation, many kids have never heard a conversation like this. They just think some people came into this world being able to get things done and some didn't. They don't know that there are strategies. I've actually had this conversation with kids and they are like, "You do what?!" "You do wha..." I didn't know there was strategies. So, it's just, that's called teaching responsibility. Knowing yourself and figuring it out. Don't just, sometimes when people say I am teaching them responsibility, I say, "No, you're teaching them a lesson." You know, lighten up a little bit. Because you need to make sure you're not assuming that the parents are going to be there to teach them everything they need.

There was Lyn Corno did a study that homework of itself does not teach children. So, she said, "There is a myth; the myth is homework shapes responsibility" and went back to what I just said. When the parents are there that helps support and supervise that homework can foster personal responsibility; if the parents are there to do it. Now, as a parent, I actually, you know, sometimes use that as well. Sometimes I say, "ahhhhhh!" Let me figure out the way to teach responsibility, don't make it homework.

Parent involvement should be kept to a minimum and focus on showing an interest in support for the learning goals. That's kind of your parent involvement question. "How involved should parents be?" It should be a minimum. Now, some people disagree and you can feel, feel to disagree. It's certainly legitimate to ask, to inform parents, but not to have parents help them with work. Actually, many studies show minimal and even a negative effect when parents are asked to help students with homework. Why would that happen? Yes!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:17:08

DEBRA PICKERING: The new everyday map, example, would be what?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:17:15

DEBRA PICKERING: Okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:17:20

DEBRA PICKERING: One reason that parents should not be helping and it could hurt their learning is because, you say, "No, do it my way," and now the kid hasn't learned how to do it the everyday math way or whatever it is and, you know, they say they go back to school, "My mom said it's a lot faster if I'd just do it this way; I don't get it." You know, and parents say inappropriate things sometimes. I remember one night with my daughter, she is a really good student, but she, I got home late, she was crying, she said, "I can't do this algebra." You know, so I said, "Honey, I would really like to help you, but research says I shouldn't, so." Instead, she wasn't going to buy that, so I said, "Okay, stop crying, go downstairs, get a glass of water, get me a glass of wine, and get right up here." I was reading through the book and I had the same reaction. She came up and I'm afraid, and I have to confess I said this, I said, "This is the stupidest way of doing it I have ever seen; I wouldn't do it that way." Well that was real helpful. Well I was tired. I was fed up and that was not helping. That's one reason. What's another reason parents should not be involved in sitting down and helping children?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:18:34

DEBRA PICKERING: Yeah, when your, your mother said, "I can't." So it's not like you know how to do it differently, it's like, "I have no clue what you're learning now." So if you expect parents to help you're going to have a lot of parents who can't. Yes!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:18:52

DEBRA PICKERING: Teachers are sending the homework to tell or determine whether the kid got the learning or not. Right? But if you're bringing it... Right! The teacher's not getting the right feedback, because it looks like the kid can do it and they can't, because the parents did it for them. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:19:13

DEBRA PICKERING: Parents stepping out of the role of parent and becoming the teacher is not a good mix, because .....

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:19:26

DEBRA PICKERING: No! Parents are not always the best teachers. I get cranky, you know, I go, "Okay will do it one more time, why didn't you listen in school?" You know, that's not good. Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

DEBRA PICKERING: And, so they have day care. That's coming into the mix. By the time they come back they don't even know who did the homework. It was just in their backpack, you know. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I agree. 1:19:52

DEBRA PICKERING: You were not trained as a teacher, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ I'm his mom.

DEBRA PICKERING: Thank you. Don't want to argue. Have you ever had an argument with your child when you're trying to help him with homework? You know and there's this, "fine!" "Fine!" "Well you're not my teacher!" "You're right!" "So do it yourself!" "C'mon!" You know that's great, yeah, that's really good. Or the one time I was helping my second son with his science and I looked up and guess what? I was the only one sitting at the table. He says, "I'll be right back mom!" Yep.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just have a question. My children are younger.

DEBRA PICKERING: Your children are younger.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. Kindergarten and I have a child in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with special needs.

DEBRA PICKERING: Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. So, when your saying parents shouldn't help, are you talking all ages?

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes. What we're saying here is, now, does it mean every single instance, no. Research never says that, but many studies show minimal help is better and even negative effects when parents are helping.

Now! This is, remember what I say, "with homework." Now. If you say I think I can sit down with my child, kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and help them understand what they're supposed to understand, what is the habit they're going to get into that they're going to take with them to 7<sup>th</sup> grade? And that's what you want to do, so I would say to the teacher, "My child cannot come home and do this homework on their own. I have to re-teach." There is a problem. Now does that mean you never sit down and help your kid? Of course you're going to sit down sometimes to help your kid, but just know, I learned the hard way too and then I saw the research. I said, "Well I should've known that before." My high-achieving student when I started to travel was panicked that I wasn't there. When, you know, she got to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade, that I wasn't there to, you know, check through. She was like, I am... She was lost. You know a so I had already created the habit that I was always going to be there. So she really didn't have to pay

that much attention in school if she didn't need to, because I would re-teach. You just be careful what you're communicating when you sit down and help them.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And you know what? I think one of the greatest things with my son's primary school is they had a parents session, so you get an understanding of how their teaching and reading.

DEBRA PICKERING: So they had a parent session, so you got that you got an understanding of how their teaching and reading? Very nice

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You know what? Okay! I'm not going to correct him that he spelled this wrong because this is how--

DEBRA PICKERING: Very nice. You're saying?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is what—1:22:16

DEBRA PICKERING: I agree. And the schools taught you how to help them, how to support the homework. Here's the thing, if I saw at school how they're teaching reading and the kid came home with homework, I still wouldn't help them with the homework. However, when I sat down to read with them later I do the same thing they're doing in school. You see the difference.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If you're not getting much homework yet, so I'm---

DEBRA PICKERING: Yes. Well you're lucky, yeah, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:22:41

DEBRA PICKERING: It's great. You want parents to know what to do. You want them, you want parents to know what I'm I supposed to do here. Now, here is the problem. You can't tell parents. Do not help them with their homework and then have major negative consequences if they don't finish it. That's the conflict that is you know, I think you'll run into. Let's get to accountability.

Performance on homework should not be considered a reliable assessment of students learning. That's one thing. Never consider homework a reliable assessment. Does anyone disagree with that? So, when people put that into the grade book as an assessment of what they were learning, that is an error; that's invalid. Might be reliable, but you can't count on that. Do not count on that. And now were gonna kind of get back to the other one. There are 3 ways to approach accountability - time, grading, and influence on performance. Let's look at time first. So I'm the teacher and I go, "Yeah,

okay, it's not an assessment, but how do I hold them accountable?" Okay. Here's some examples of time being used. Let's read that.

Okay! So some places the accountability is, I'm taking your time. Recess, or lunch, or after school, or something. That's one kind of consequence for not doing it. Here's a different approach, it affects your grade, like this. There's several examples.

Now, I could have 5 other examples of the teacher saying. This is how your grade in this class will be influenced if you do not complete homework and there's lots of ways to do it. If it's a major factor or a minor factor or some way. Okay? Here's the third way, so some teachers say, "The accountability is in my assessment." I don't have to have this, you know, "Did you do your homework?" "Let me see." "Did you do your homework?" "Did you do...." I don't do that. I'll give you an assessment and if the kids, you know, doing fine on the assessment, then I'm not sure if it was the homework that was a factor, but something worked and they got it, so am not worried about it otherwise. Which of those 3 do you think we would recommend? Which would you recommend? Actually, all 3 of them I can see the point. I can see the point. We don't actually need to have a favorite there. I mean, I personally have a favorite, but from data I can't tell you that one of those is better than the other. Now look at A though. Let me make one point about what the research tells us. There, ummm, just read that last bullet there.

So, if people chose time as their accountability and kids lose recess, here is where it starts to violate data, the research, is when you have, you lost recess or lunch time and that's taking away the kids' breaks for the day, that does inhibit learning for many kids. So, taking away their, the very kid that needs to go and run as fast as possible for 15 minutes, is a kid that stays in from doing from recess to do their homework. And someone will say, "Well they get individual help." Well there are other ways to give individual help, besides denying them recess. Now, I'm not saying never deny them recess, that's a philosophical, I'm just saying make sure the kid gets breaks, physical breaks, because we do know that is, is major.

The grading one, there is a decision that you have to make around grading. I'm going to kind of explain the grading. In giving grades. The recommendation is this. You should have an academic grade and then you can, if you want, give a non-academic grade, which could include something like homework completion, work completion, class participation. Now here's the philosophical. Here's the data recommendation I'm telling ya. In everybody's grade book these 2 should be separate. If they got an A on the math test, they got an A on the math test. If they did all the math tests it says that. How to separate grade for things like that the teacher decides what those things are and then those things come together for a nonacademic grade. Here's the last decision that a teacher makes, "Do I put these two together for an overall grade

or do I just report them separately? That's totally philosophical. Yours is not philosophical. When you keep grades, you should always have in the grade book somewhere a very accurate pure record of how the student is progressing towards the standards and in a separate place all of their stuff like homework completion. So, here is what we recommend you can't do. You don't average in zeros for every missing homework. You keep that someplace else. And then you make the decision at the end if they have an F for homework completion. How much does that effect an overall grade? But report both. Say they gotten an A on my test and an F on the homework. So I'm going to give them a D. Well that means you've weighted it really heavily or you can say they got a Bs on the test, but they, you know, F on homework and then likewise if they got C's on the tests and A's for doing homework how are you going to weight that? Whatever you weight it, just be clear what they've done, so anyone looking at the record would be able to say, "Ahh, this kid knows there math, doesn't do homework." "This kid does homework every night, but not so much the math." Just make sure the records show it and then when you decide to weight it make sure that there is a school policy and approach to how much it should be weighted, because that means we should have it more equitable. So, it might be homework counts 10% of the grade or, you know, you take the academic grade x 5 and the nonacademic grade x 1 and, you know, then the average, whatever how you would do it. But the thing is, make sure that it is consistent with what you believe about, about grading.

So, now some people would say, "I wouldn't even put homework completion under nonacademic factors." Okay. Some say, "Oh yeah, I think it's really important. I keep track." They actually give them a grade for how much homework they completed, not, not by the way, how they did on the homework. It's a homework completion grade. A homework completion grade. Cause you remember, any score they have on the homework for their performance is not a good assessment anyway and should never be included in that academic grade. Does that make sense? Let's hear the leaders. What are some of the questions or issues or concerns that come up around this accountability? What are things that came up at your table? Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:30:24

DEBRA PICKERING: Student, philosophics say, "Students should never fail, because they didn't complete their homework."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right. But on the other hand, they also could not pass.

DEBRA PICKERING: On the other hand...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That they really shouldn't be... their grade shouldn't be inflated as far as...

DEBRA PICKERING: Oh, the grade should not be inflated, because they did do their homework. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Borderline, I always just use a borderline. There's like an 89.9, you know...

DEBRA PICKERING: Right! Yep! That means you're, you're saying, "I have the grade, I have their performance academically, I see what it is and I also go I see that they completed all their homework." Giving it some weight is what most people do, just not dramatic weight. It just might bump it a little bit. Now, some would say, "Yeah, but kids won't do it if they..." Well, yes they will when they start not doing well on the assessments. Now if they're doing well on the assessments and they're not doing their homework, what's the message? Yeah, the homework wasn't gonna work for them anyway. So, when you were talking about independent homework, part of that is it. You say, "Look kids, I'm not sure what you need. I'm going to try to give it my best shot if you do this." My experience tells me you'll do better on the assessments, but you can't guarantee that for all kids, you know that and I know that. And any teacher who says I know what's good for all kids on any particular day at 2:30 is just kidding themselves. And so you say, but, if you don't want to completely differentiate, you can say, "I'll give it my best shot and I'll design the assignment so that there is some flexibility in there in terms of how much you're going to do in the time I want to work."

So most people would sort of, sort of agree that this is, you know, this makes a lot of sense. So I go back to the recommendation. If homework completion is a factor in the student's overall grade. Now, notice it said homework completion. Not performance on the homework! They got them all right. That does not figure into the academic grade. The weight of that factor should be consistently applied, clearly reported, and aligned with the school's mission. What it means is this. You say, "How much weight should anyone put on homework?" Let me tell ya of an anecdote where the school did not do that, and here's the dilemma that got in. The kid took advanced geometry. In order to take advanced geometry 2<sup>nd</sup> semester you have to get a C or better...No, I think it was a B or better the first semester. A kid took advanced geometry at this high school for first semester and he aced all the tests. They had the test right there, he aced them all. However, he never turned in homework. Now I don't know if he completed it or not, we don't know. We just know that he never turned it in. So, that, that particular teacher 00000 average in and got a D- in the class. Went to sign up for advanced geometry, second semester. Now this is an arguably gifted math student. Went to sign up for advanced geometry second semester. Denied registration because he got a D- from this teacher. Now if he had the teacher next door he would have had an A in advanced geometry, because that teacher didn't talk to the kids about, "You really need this homework so you can tell me tomorrow what you need to work on." That's, you know, there's a real..., but this teacher is like, "Nope, 0 for every single

time. He knew my policy.” Parent calls the principal. “You are kidding me. You're not going to let my student, my kid learn anymore geometry, because he didn't turn in the teacher's homework.” You're the principal. What's your answer? Tell the person next to you. You're the principal talking to mom on the phone. What are you gonna say? Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: A prerequisite is there to make sure that they have the fundamental knowledge to be able to go to the next course...

DEBRA PICKERING: So, you say to the mom. The reason why we have that requirement of the grade is to make sure the knowledge is there, so they will be successful the second semester and...

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Clearly, her son has the knowledge...

DEBRA PICKERING: And clearly, and clearly, so you are saying, clearly your son, on my records here show your son has the knowledge to be successful 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, so I, of course he can take geometry. Anyone say anything different? Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I agree with that...

DEBRA PICKERING: There's another part.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, I think you need to have a conversation with the teacher that failed him or close to that and go to them and first of all he probably should be working with that teacher... but on the other hand if that was not a policy, then I think we are dealing with different things. I would have to have a conversation with that teacher saying, “Look, this is why I made this decision,” because I do not want that teacher to think that I'm not backing them...

DEBRA PICKERING: Right. So you say to the parent, of course they can take 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, but then you go to the teacher and you say here's what I just said to the parent. Now, I'm going to be the teacher. I'm mad at you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well first, I think I would care and I would go to that teacher and say, “Okay, give me a reason why this student should not take 2<sup>nd</sup> semester...”

DEBRA PICKERING: Okay, you're the principal. You're telling me his teacher, “Give me a reason why not turning in homework turned an A into a D-.” And I say to you, and I show you my grade book, and I say, “Here you go, Mr. principal boss.” I like to throw in that boss part, because we should be reminded that you're my boss. I say... ha ha. I show you look, “Yeah, he did fine on all these tests, but here's my homework

column and he has zeros, you do the math and added up to 68% so he got a D+, that's what we did; so what's your problem?"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The problem academically is that....

DEBRA PICKERING: Academically, he's capable of doing it, but that's not our policy here Mr. Principal. Our policy here is that you have to get a B or better to do it and he didn't get a B in my class. "Why are you overriding me; you're not supporting me?"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:36:31

DEBRA PICKERING: Well the kid knew he was getting it. So the kid knew... Yes, in the back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:36:39

DEBRA PICKERING: Does that grade represent what they know or understand. No! No! But, grades at this high school don't. All of Mike's colleagues here do the same thing. They average in all kinds of things, cause that's, we don't have a policy here. So, don't, what do you tell.... what is this... you're trying to take away my autonomy? Yes!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:37:05

DEBRA PICKERING: You're the principal and you want to talk to the kid and say, "Why didn't you do the homework?" Okay, now let me do the kid... "Cause I don't need to." No! I got an A on all the tests. I don't need to. I did what it needed to do to learn what I needed to learn." Yeah, so, I'm, so I present... Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just wanted to make a statement. I'm gonna say, in my statement quote. "Where's faith here?"

DEBRA PICKERING: Where's what?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Faith.

DEBRA PICKERING: Faith.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:37:39

DEBRA PICKERING: Oh, but the policy of the school did. The policy of the school said you must have a B in order to take second semester.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But what I'm talking about when they say, you have to provide me \_\_\_\_\_ work with what the Feds say. We have to provide a free and appropriate public \_\_\_\_\_. 1:37:02

DEBRA PICKERING: Oh, when the Feds say, oh so you're going to use the Fed argu..., yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: If everyone just regardless of their ability or disability...

DEBRA PICKERING: To access. People, not misinterpret. People interpret that differently saying, you can still have a policy that we're not gonna set you up for failure by letting you take it. I agree with you by the way. If you're going to sign up for it, they're fine. Now, here is, I mean, you guys have backbones. Good for you.

You know, some people say, "Well what is he going to do? That was the school policy." It didn't come down from the mountain. You made it up. So, what you do is change it, so beyond just having that conversation with the teacher, I would say the parent, "We will be changing our policy. Thank you very much for pointing this out." I'm going to go to the teachers and I'm going to say, "From now on, you keep grades like that and here's our new policy." That academic grade needs to be B or better for them to take a 2nd semester or I go all the way and say anyone can take it, but I can say at least we will counsel them not too.

If you want to include homework completion in the grade, it may be no more than 15% of the grade, that's the bottom line, thank you very much. I'm going to have some saying, "You can't tell me to do that!" Oh yes I can, you're not self-employed. That's our policy here. I mean, really, you gotta have a backbone. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:39:27

DEBRA PICKERING: What actually happened is the principal said yes he could take it and I don't know if they've ever resolved it or changed the policy. I have to tell you, that some teachers were extremely angry at the principal. That kid knew the policy, and they said, they said, "Well, you know what, I don't think they changed his grade, so the D- was still on there, but he did get to keep learning geometry." So, now, I don't know the end of the story. What I'm telling you is unless we are going to have these conversations; unless someone is willing to take a position, at a minimum, you have to do that. That's step one. And then make your policy based on that. By the way, being able to play sports, same thing. Being able to, the very kids, this is a little side, let me just, just, I cause I need to say it. The whole notion of timed sports and extracurricular to grades and academics has got to be rethought. The very kids who could be winners, I mean wind so much by participating in extracurricular and sports, are some of the kids that we denied, because for whole variety of reasons, they're not

doing well academically. Oh popular huh? That doesn't always go over that well. I'll come back here. I like you guys.

But let me just say this is not just me saying it. Private schools, the extracurricular and sports are much a requirement and a part of the kids' experience as academics are. And until we monitor how grades are given. Like I said, some of the kids who are failing, I think if they had the, you know, some help from a wonderful coach or a sponsor of extracurricular activity, it could be incredible. So, there are a lot of things, that's kind of, I'm getting into the grading issues, but let me stop for a second, because we are running out of time.

One last question that I have. I'm actually not going to have you do the policy. This morning I showed you a slide and let me go to that. A lot of these issues - I left my glasses down there and that's not good. A lot of these issues are going to go away as we become formative assessment systems. Do you remember that? Thank you very much. Do you remember that this morning? In a system that is formative, in other words, the whole system is designed for the kids to learn as much as they possibly can in the 180 days that you have them. What's the rule of homework in a truly formative system? That is different than now? Can you see how it has to change? This system has nothing to do with, here are all my assignments, jump through these hoops, and I will give you the points. No. This system is designed to say, "I'm going to give you assignments that I think will help you in your assessment of those things." So, for example, if you are gone for 2 weeks. It isn't about makeup work. It is silly conversation about makeup work. What you missed are these other things we've learned. Here are some resources for you to learn them. You'll be assessed on those. Because you know what? Everything we teach has information about it free online, so they can do it. I was struck by, when I used to take my kids with me, my travel, during the year I would take each one of them, just one-on-one with me on a trip and they would attend a school where I was working and it was really cool, because you have one-on-one time with your kids. I'd go do some teachers and say, "I'm going to take, you know, her with me next week" and some teachers say, "Arghhh fine, give me some time I'll put together all the makeup work." Some teachers would say, "This is what were learning, you know shapes and reading comprehension." And then I could say, "Well, where were going they have shapes, so we'll be fine" "Where were going were gonna go do reading on the plane. Were going to be... and you want them to write, what are you looking at? Copy sentence, good. We're good to go." It's not about let me haul in all of the makeup work. You know, likewise homework is not about, "Did you do your homework?" Home time is to work on getting ready to be reassessed in the areas that you want to improve your grade and improve your score. Now I'm telling you a lot of people are skeptical, but the teachers who are switching to this system say, kids are more likely to work at home, because they don't call it homework. They spend time

at home with a peer, online, with the materials and say, "You know what? Topic number 4 there, I'm ready to be reassessed." Now, as a teacher I would say, "I want some evidence that you've done some work." I'm not just gonna just keep assessing. "What's the evidence you've done some work?" "Okay, let's go." So, homework time. Bill Gates started the new American Tech High Schools and you talk to those kids and they're very much a system like this and they would say to you, "Oh, we don't have homework at this high school." And a guy said, I talked to him, I said, "What do you mean you don't have homework?" They said, "No, no, no, we work at home all the time, but we don't have homework." What they were saying is they're working towards particular goals; home time is some of the time they used to work toward their particular goals. So, a lot of these issues will change. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:44:58

DEBRA PICKERING: What students? Okay, there is that occasionally a kid.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 1:45:10.

DEBRA PICKERING: In a true... Right. In a truly... but it's sort of you're, you're talking about status quo that happens now.

There's some things we teach and the kids sitting there already now everything you're going to teach. Some are going to struggle by the end. So, therefore, remember the pictures I showed you of a whole class structure and a learning lab structure? All classrooms have to have that. So that kids are moving through at their own pace. Now were not there yet. So in the meantime, here's the good news. You typically do not have a kid who comes in and they know 4 on every topic you're about to teach. In a true standards base system they would just move on to the next level of that topic, but most of us aren't on a true status-based system.

So you have to then look for resources in the resource room or a GT sponsor to help you design different curriculum. However, it is very possible for kids that already now certain of those topics. That's more common. Topic 9 and 10, assess me before you teach it and I'm good. However, usually they also have an area of weakness. So, learning lab time they work on that. So that's more, more typical.

What I'm trying to say is we move towards forming a status-based system. Homework issues will go away. It will be, you know, home time. Now, the teacher might still say, "Here is my suggestion and what you do for the next 2 nights if you want to be reassessed in that area." And then you give the resources and materials and support. So, home time, oh my gosh, I mean, that's great time, and many times, but not this whole, I'm going to check and see if you did your homework.

So as you look at the key issues that we examined this morning and this afternoon. There are the, whoops, sorry. What was wrong? There we go.

These are the 3 major areas that we've covered. We should have policies on time and purpose. Put time constraints on it and make sure it's a valid purpose for the learning goal and the kids know what the learning goal is.

Assignments and feedback. Design them for the learning goal, don't just say, "Oh do this worksheet." And make sure every way you can that they get feedback as soon as possible. There are infinite numbers of ways to do that. And then parent involvement and accountability. Parent involvement should be kept to a minimum and should be in the form of support and interest and in what they're doing and accountability should be performance, ultimately performance. Even if you decide to take some of their time in order to work with them or to have it affect their grade. Just make sure it's consistent with your policy. So, there are more complex issues than this, but kind of for the first, you know go around these kind of make sense.

The question I would leave with you is this, "If you were king or queen for the day and you were writing policy..." And let me say this, most policies say something like, homework is designed to help kids, blah, blah, blah, blah, and blah and then they'll have it Monday through Thursday and, but not on weekends or you can have it all the time, or whatever. I mean somehow they say, "But usually the audience for that is kind of like parents and students." What I'm talking about is if you had a policy that if I came to work for you, you'd say, "Deborah, you have a lot of autonomy, but here is how we handle homework and you can't violate these." What would be on that policy that you hand me as teacher? Would it say something like, "Make sure your homework is good" or "Be sure to assign homework Monday through Thursday." Or would it say things like, "Always put time constraints on the homework, always ask the kids, always give feedback," you know all of those things. That's kind of the question left with schools to decide what they want to do. Certainly individuals could decide, but because it is such a sensitive issue and so impactful of so many kids the recommendation is that the school decides what are your bottom-line policies for teachers to follow in homework. Okay? Any other questions?

Thank you very much and enjoy your lunch.