

CLASS ACT

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What is the way forward for homework?

Should schools do away with homework? Or must the approach to giving students homework be changed? *Khaleej Times* finds out...



Dhanusha Gokulan

DUBAI — Life is hard for an eight-year-old school-going child in Dubai. Take Indian national Arav Krishna's example. A resident of Sharjah, he is a student of Kindergarten Starters in Dubai. According to his mother Reshmi Nair, Arav has to wake up at 5.30am every morning and catch his bus to school by 6.15am.

"After a hectic day in school, filled with classes and activities, he comes back from school by 2.45pm... after which he has dance, karate and other extra-curricular lessons," said Reshmi. The fourth grader, after finishing all this, then has to finish homework in Math, English, Arabic, Science, and study his daily lessons as well. While doing all this, his mother has to see to that he has had enough sleep and has eaten his meals well.

There are several such parents in the UAE who face the challenge of having to sit down and complete homework with their children. She added: "I don't even know how to



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Navin Valrani, CEO, Arcadia Preparatory School

teach them Arabic... I need to pay additionally to send him to an Arabic coaching centre."

"Children spend so much time in the school and sometimes students are assigned to homework that they cannot do entirely on their own. Once, my daughter was asking to build a model of an Arab wind tower... She's in Grade 3. There was no

way that she could do it alone," said another Dubai-based parent Pooja Sudheer. This issue is spread across curriculums and schools and government education authorities are working hard to change the trend.

Changing landscapes

However, in the soon-to-open Arcadia Preparatory School in Jumeirah Village Triangle, the system of traditional homework or assignment writing habits are being done away with.

School authorities said that the learning programme is developed with extra-curricular activities such as coding and robotics, animation, music and photography.

For this purpose, school has developed a unique Enrichment Learning Programme (ELP), which is a forward-thinking and all-inclusive programme delivered to the students as part of the extended school day. The ELP programme will be provided at no additional cost to parents of children in Years 1 to 6 and will also include in-school homework support sessions run by the school's teachers.

"Youngsters should have the chance to try out the broadest spectrum of activities possible, whether that's gymnastics, chess, cricket or cookery, Mandarin Chinese or outdoor survival skills," said Navin Valrani, CEO of the school.

He added: "Parents will be all too familiar with the scenario of having to juggle endless tasks once children arrive home from school, including preparing the evening meal and completing chores alongside dealing with children's homework queries — all on top of trying to find a moment in which to relax, unwind and enjoy quality time together as a family."

Valrani said that by offering students the option of attending teacher-led homework clubs as part of the ELP we aim to alleviate some of the hectic after-school rushing around. The School is set to open in August, 2016, in Dubai's Jumeirah Village Triangle and will offer the National Curriculum for England to pupils studying from Foundation Stage One to Key Stage Two.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF HOMEWORK



Krista Fidelella, Al Diyafah High School

I always hated homework. But I have understood its real value. Homework is given for our own benefit. It gives a wider understanding about a topic and improves knowledge.



Malavika Suja, Delhi Private School, Sharjah

In my opinion, homework is as important as class work. It's just practice at home on what we have learned in school. If revision is important shouldn't homework be too?



Lamya Juzer Gandhi, Our Own English High School, Dubai

Yes, Homework acts as self-assessment. It helps quickly refresh the particular topic. It makes us self-dependent and prepare us better for next class with confidence."



Fathima Ruba, The Indian High School, Dubai

Homework is a regular refresher. Too often, students forget much of the material taught during the school over time. Homework can help alleviate this problem.



Derick Gladston Zeeno, Sharjah Indian School

It benefits but too much homework can encourage cheating because students end up copying off one another in an attempt to finish all their assignments.