

Not enough homework

New Jersey school district limit on homework inhibits responsibility



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Most kids hate homework. Most kids complain about having too much homework and whine about how they would rather be playing outside with their friends.

Evidently, the kids in Piscataway, N.J., complained so much that the parents — and the school district — finally gave in. The school board in Piscataway has set a policy this year that limits the amount of homework given to Piscataway public school students.

The parents and school district are giving their children an easy way out and ultimately setting a bad example.

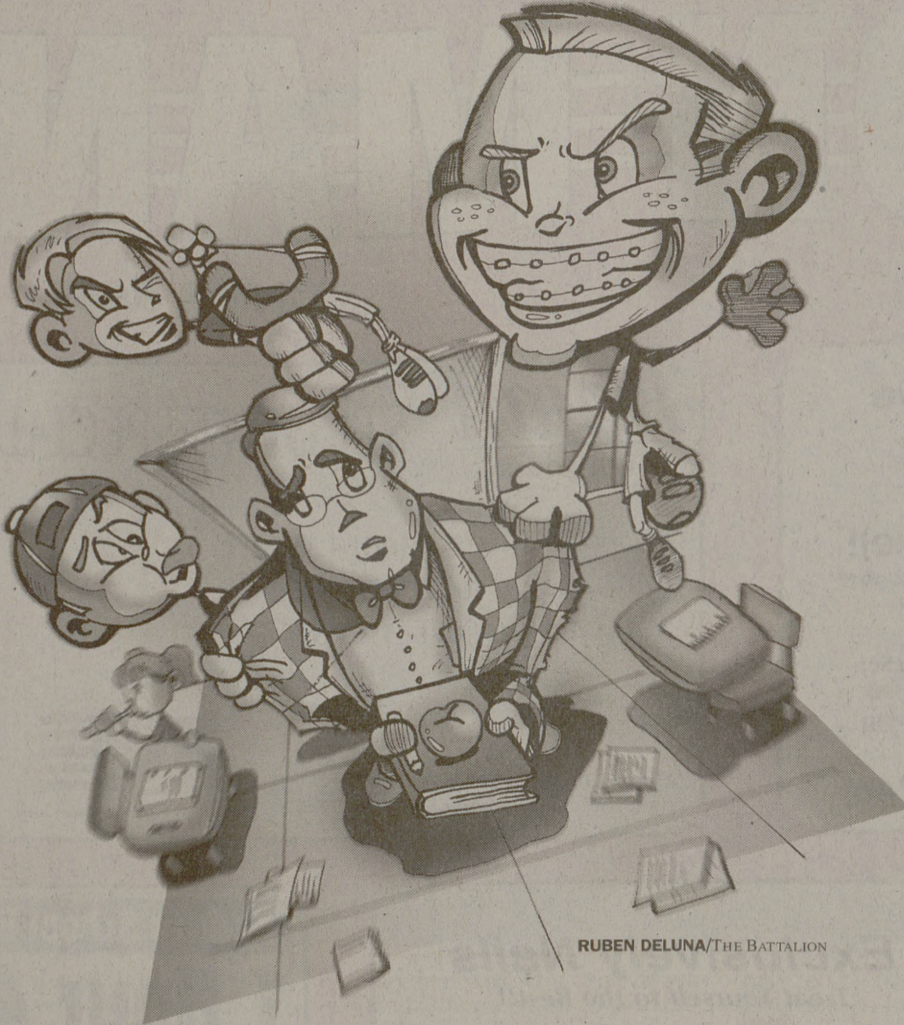
The policy does have some reasonable points when dealing with children in grade school. There is no reason children in third grade should have to do four hours of homework — they need adequate downtime each day.

But the time many of these children spend on their homework is time they could spend with their parents, who should be helping and taking an interest in their children's schoolwork.

For children whose parents show no interest in their children's work, the mandatory 30 minutes of work will point out this problem to the teachers in school.

The high school kids, however, are a different story. One of the most important assets children could receive from parents and teachers is the freedom to make their own decisions.

One of the most difficult things to learn is how to manage time wisely, but it is a lesson that each person must learn on his or her own. Students need to decide for themselves how much time they need



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

to study and how much time they need to spend resting.

This choice is the reason many parents ease up on curfews as their children near the age when they leave home. And, it is the reason children whose parents do not ease up tend to get lost when they are on their own because they have no practice in personal responsibility. Many people

know that the wildest kids in college are the ones who were the most sheltered growing up and are unable to deal with their new freedom.

In another semester, the seniors from Piscataway will go to college, where they will either spend much more than two hours a night on homework or will not get the A's they received in high school.

When A&M freshmen register for classes, advisers recommend that students study three hours outside of class for every one hour in class.

While it is important to realize that not every student will need to spend that much time studying for each class, in some classes, students might need to spend double that time.

Students who have never been taught time management skills will be clueless and most likely unsuccessful in their first few months of college.

Another problem is that this new homework limit teaches children to do what is mandatory for them, rather than what is in the best interest for them to learn.

The two-hour limit focuses on doing homework just for the sake of doing work, instead of spending quality time on useful assignments that contribute to these students' educations.

Often, college professors suggest additional assignments that may not be mandatory or have homework problems that will not be graded.

Students who are accustomed to doing only mandatory work will most likely overlook these helpful assignments.

The parents in Piscataway are whining as much as their children are. They spit out figures about how children are, on average, doing almost an hour more than they were in 1981.

Maybe these moms and dads are the ones who need to be doing homework. Glancing at any current college undergraduate catalog would tell them that SAT scores and grade-point ratios are up — way up from 1981.

The competition these days is high, and these parents are not giving their kids an advantage over anyone by giving them more time to play outside in the afternoons.

Melissa Bedsole is a junior psychology major.

Gold digger

Smith lawsuit a travesty



LUKE MCMAHAN

It has been said everything is bigger in Texas. It seems Texas scandals are bigger and nastier as well. Such is the case with the current dispute between Anna Nicole Smith, widow of G.

Howard Marshall — a billionaire oil baron — and Marshall's son, Pierce Marshall.

Smith has filed a lawsuit against Pierce Marshall in an attempt to get her hands on half of Howard Marshall's assets.

In one of the most appalling stories of greed and betrayal imaginable, Smith has filed suit against Pierce Marshall, claiming that she had been wrongfully denied an amount in excess of \$1 billion. The circumstances surrounding the lawsuit are even more eye-catching than the figure in question.

G. Howard Marshall, 86 years old at the time, met Smith in G.G.'s Cabaret, an "uptown" Houston-area club featuring topless dancing. Marshall was 60 years older than Smith.

Smith said, "He asked me to dance for him, and I could see the sparkle in his eyes. I knew there was something special there."

Howard Marshall courted Smith for four years. During that period, Smith received gifts whose total worth is estimated at more than \$8 million.

At the same time, Smith made contacts that facilitated her appearance in Playboy.

At the end of this four-year period, Smith consented to one of the many marriage proposals Howard Marshall had made. Fourteen months later, he passed away.

The nature of this dispute is despicable. The fact that a dispute over money could lead to a dispute over the deceased's ashes is sickening.

Then, the plot thickened. Smith and Pierce Marshall immediately began to fight over the fruits of Howard Marshall's labor.

Smith learned after her husband's death that she was not included in his will. It turned out his assets had been tied up in trusts for years.

Howard Marshall never operated with very much liquid capital in comparison to his net worth. In fact, Howard Marshall had to borrow money to finance the engagement ring he bought for Smith, which was so extravagant that she was featured wearing it on television.

Smith claimed in her suit that she was entitled to one-half of Howard Marshall's assets based on a verbal promise he supposedly had made her.

The dispute between the two potential beneficiaries was so heated that they had held separate funerals for their beloved father and husband, each being conducted with half of his ashes.

The nature of this dispute is despicable. The fact that a dispute over money could lead to a dispute over the deceased's ashes is sickening. Unfortunately, in a situation like this, the blame for the lack of respect for the deceased must be assessed. It lies entirely with Smith.

This is absolutely no mention of Smith in the will. It is very cut and dried. During the course of courting and marriage, Smith was showered with gifts.

Many of the career opportunities she received are a direct result of the limelight she was cast into because of her high-rolling husband.

All in all, Smith was very well taken care of. Apparently, she was digging for the whole gold mine and not just a few choice nuggets.

Smith's trying to lay claim to all the wealth acquired by Howard Marshall in the 86 years prior to their meeting is not just. This just does not make sense.

In an interview with "20/20" in response to an inquiry as to what would be the first thing she would do if victorious in the courtroom, Smith said, "I will go to church and get on my knees until they are bruised and bloody and thank the good Lord for doing the right."

Smith also should consider asking for a conscience, not to mention a shred of decency.

Luke McMahan is a senior industrial engineering major.

Mail Call

Offended students missed point of pro-life displays

In response to Chris Carter's Oct. 30 column.

When I saw the movie *Schindler's List*, my eyes were flooded with graphic images: people being brutally murdered and dead bodies lying everywhere.

But that was not what I was appalled at. Rather, I was deeply disturbed that human lives had been destroyed, all because they were "unwanted."

When I saw the anti-abortion signs from Aggies for life, of course, my stomach turned a little bit at the images. But you know what sickened me the most? The fact that I was looking at a murder victim. The realization that someone had killed this baby.

I will never know his or her name, nor will anyone else. That baby will never be able to grow up, go to school, make friends, yell for the Aggies or grow old. This person was never asked if he or she wanted to live: someone else's choice took his or hers away.

No matter how you look at it, abortion is the premeditated killing of a human being and is therefore murder.

We are getting away from the real issue. Let us stop the selfish complaints of "I am offended," and instead remember that a person was killed.

Zack Russell
Class of '02

Criticism of Vision 2020 vague

In response to Jennifer Ramby's Oct. 30 column.

I was appalled when I read the recent column concerning an expansion of the fine arts and international students programs.

I had no idea that people attempting to expand their minds at an institution of higher education would disapprove of programs that support higher-level thinking skills.

I agree that pre-existing programs should be supported and continuously funded, but "changing the makeup of the student body, which could have long-term effects on what it means to be an Aggie" is not a sufficient reason to trash Vision 2020.

Fear of different types of people is a major concern of the Texas A&M campus. It certainly explains the huge white population and miniscule minority populations among students. I am half Hispanic and find it sad that there is not a larger minority population.

You may be thinking, "What does this have to do with a music program?" Well, the final comments the author of this article made about the "changing makeup of the student body [having] long-term effects on what it means to be an Aggie" is a fine example of this problem with our campus.

Not only do liberal arts and international student programs promote diversity of student races, but they also promote diversity of ideas and experiences.

The latter is what appears to be the main concern with Ramby and others like her. Not only do I play the french horn, I am forced to do on my own time due to the lack of available programs.

I learned a lot about the similarities in people around the world despite our cultural and historical differences. This is a very important aspect of the

learning process. How else will the world progress if different people cannot come together for a similar goal, in this case education?

We should share our Aggie experience with the rest of the world. We are known for our friendliness and hospitality, so why is it so different now?

If the Aggie spirit is based on discrimination of ideas and cultures and not on friendliness and companionship, then I came to the wrong campus.

Dawne Duan
Class of '03

When I was an undergraduate a half-century ago, I espoused the same line Ramby espouses.

Why require me to study all of those courses when all I need are the journalism courses? My dean, a much more astute man than I, set me straight.

He challenged me to tell him which course anywhere in the University would be useless to me in my career as a reporter. I failed the challenge.

So I now challenge Ramby: Which course at TAMU would not be of some value to you at some time during your career as a reporter?

True, specialization is not a bad thing. However, for a well-grounded, well-rounded education for the 21st century, people need to know more and more about more and more. Liberal arts provides a wealth of information about the past and the present — history, archeology, astronomy, political science, English literature, foreign languages — the list is endless, and all of it essential.

Those who do not learn more and more about more and more will be doomed to live in the past, not in the future.

Why not make TAMU No. 1 in every discipline? What would that hurt? Nothing.

What would it help? A lot. Sure, TAMU was founded on agriculture and mechanics, cows and plows, to teach Texans the techniques of farming and how to repair broken equipment,

a necessary talent when the nearest town was a day's ride away and money was scarce.

But, we have come a long way from a horse-and-wagon society. We have reached the moon and are seeking the stars; we are also trying to reach our contemporaries just across the border.

Well, TAMU has changed. Thank God. Students do not come here for what TAMU is, if they ever did, but for what TAMU can make of them.

I hope sincerely that TAMU does change the makeup of the student body, of the definition of a typical Aggie. I hope TAMU does have a major effect on what it means to be an Aggie. So far, in 125 years, TAMU has changed a lot of Aggies. And Texas and the United States are better off for it.

Fortunately, education teaches more than a profession; it teaches people how to live, a necessary ability, given the fact that the demands of society change not year by year, but day by day.

So a stronger arts and sciences program is far from being politically offensive; it is a national necessity. And ranking 17th cannot be good enough. It is barely acceptable.

All change costs money. Major change costs major amounts of money. TAMU is no longer state-supported; it is state-assisted. TAMU receives money from many sources in addition to the state: student tuition and fees, contributions from graduates and friends, and donations by corporations and foundations, among others. Today, the main job of the TAMU president is not to run the University, but to seek funding for its multiple programs.

Thank God for the vision of those who developed Vision 2020. Each of us may disagree with parts of it, but none of us should denigrate any part of it because it is designed to produce better citizens, citizens who can make life better for us and for our descendants.

Douglas Starr
Professor of Journalism



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I'M A UNITER, NOT A DIVIDER. I CAN GET THINGS DONE. I'M A LEADER. I CAN LEAD....

FOR THE LAST TIME, TELL ME WHAT THREE PLUS THREE EQUALS!!

Young George W.

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