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No More Mindless Homework

Kaitlin Poplierz
Wayne State University

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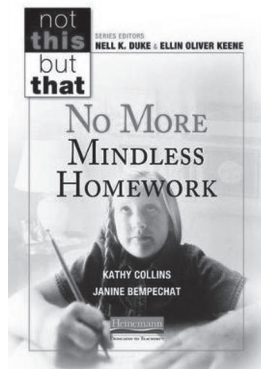
by Kaitlin Poplierz

Collins, K., & Bempechat, J. (2017). *No more mindless homework*.

Portsmouth, NH:
Heinemann Publishers.
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In *No More Mindless Homework*, Kathy Collins and Janine Bempechat encourage teachers to think beyond the typical discussion of “to assign or not to assign” homework. Instead, Collins and Bempechat encourage K-12 classroom teachers to move toward purposeful and relevant homework that centers students’ interests, families, and communities. In addition, Collins and Bempechat argue that homework should cultivate academic knowledge and skills in order for students “to foster positive beliefs about learning, establish meaningful habits of mind, and forge an academic identity” (2017, p. 21). Through the “Not This, But That” book series from Heinemann Publishers, Collins and Bempechat utilize personal narratives, research-based justifications, and tangible resources to advocate for reimagining homework that will ultimately encourage students to be lifelong learners.

No More Mindless Homework is divided into three sections: (1) Not This: Assigning “Just Because,” (2) Why Not? What Works? Homework That Promotes Lifelong Learning Behaviors, and (3) But That: Homework Reimagined. In section one, “Assigning ‘Just Because,’” Collins discuss the limitations of homework when it is assigned as simply “just because.” Collins centers personal stories, surveys from students and families, and quotes from teachers about the challenges of developing, implementing, and doing homework that is rudimentary and irrelevant. Through writing that engages the reader in professional dialogue and personal reflection, Collins invites classroom teachers to honestly and critically discuss the difficulties of homework that is not purposeful for students’ academic development.



Kaitlin Poplierz

In section two, “Homework That Promotes Lifelong Learning Behaviors,” Bempechat thoroughly discusses the research regarding the “relationship between homework, and motivation” (2017, p. 21). Bempechat outlines research-based principals that inform how teachers and families can support students in learning opportunities through homework. Thus, Bempechat comprehensively examines the effectiveness of homework when it involves opportunities for self-regulation, collaboration with families and communities, and a variety of formative assessment strategies. Importantly, Bempechat argues that homework must have a clear purpose and relevancy for students, while also fostering their own self-efficacy and autonomy as learners.

In section three, “Homework Reimagined,” Collins and Bempechat provide an array of resources, ideas, and strategies for teachers to cultivate purposeful and authentic learning opportunities for students through homework. Collins and Bempechat encourage active collaboration between teachers, students, and families in order to develop homework that acts as a bridge between school and home. Furthermore, the authors advocate for homework that is differentiated, option-based, and carefully scaffolded in order for students to be supported while engaging in homework learning experiences. In particular, Collins and Bempechat assert that homework must be “informed by children’s passions and interests” in order to create opportunities

where students may learn about themselves, classmates, families, and the community (2017, p 71).

No More Mindless Homework is a tool full of resources for classroom teachers to rethink and redevelop homework that is responsive to students' strengths, interests, and needs. Rather than regurgitative homework that is mind-numbing and immaterial, Collins and Bempechat advocate for homework that sees students as inquisitive and adept lifelong learners. In turn, Collins and Bempechat outline accessible strategies and resources for K-12 classroom teachers to utilize homework as genuine and meaningful learning opportunities for students and families. Significantly, Collins and Bempechat assert that homework is an opportunity for teachers to engage deeply with care takers, families, and

communities. In this way, Collins and Bempechat's *No More Mindless Homework* is an invitation for classroom teachers to continue reimagining the role of students' everyday lives both within homework and beyond for capacious lifelong learning.

Author Biography

Kaitlin Popielarz is a doctoral candidate, instructional coach, and course instructor at Wayne State University's College of Education. Kaitlin's research and teaching interests include connecting teacher education programs to the grassroots community in order to provide future educators the opportunity to learn community-based and culturally-sustaining pedagogy for education rooted in social justice. She can be reached at KPopielarz@wayne.edu.

