

THE KUMON BACK-TO-SCHOOL SURVEY

How Homework Habits, Distractions, Rewards & Consequences Relate To Scholastic Achievement



Ipsos Reid

Public Release Date: - September 27, 2005 – 7:00 a.m. (EDT)

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Toronto, ON –A new Ipsos Reid survey conducted on behalf of Kumon Math and Reading Centres finds that children’s homework habits vary by scholastic achievement.

Parents of children 7-14 years of age that attend public school and don’t have learning disabilities/special education needs were asked whether they feel their child is ahead of grade level, at grade level, or behind grade level. Four in ten (39%) parents think their child is ahead of grade level, 53% think they’re right at grade level, and 7% of parents think their child is behind grade level.

Some of the key differences between children believed to be above grade level and children thought to be behind grade level are as follows. Other survey findings are outlined on the proceeding pages...

Children who are ahead of their grade level are more likely to have a homework routine than those who are behind (88% vs. 59%). Moreover, children who perform well academically are more likely to ask for help with homework than those who perform poorly (68% vs. 42%).

Children who are behind their grade level are more likely than those children who are ahead of their grade level to have received help in Math (61% vs. 28%), Language Arts (57% vs. 17%), Science (20% vs. 9%) and Second Language (17% vs. 7%) courses. Children who are



ahead of their grade are more likely to have not received help in any subject at all (58% vs. 16%).

Parents of children who are ahead of their grade level are more likely to say their child faces no distractions when doing his or her homework compared to parents of children who are behind their grade level (22% vs. 10%). The biggest distractions for children who are behind their grade level are television (21%) telephone calls (17%) and siblings (17%).

Interestingly, children who are behind their grade level are more likely than those who are ahead of their grade level to have a TV in their bedroom. (50% vs. 33%). Children who are behind their grade level are also more likely to have videogames in their bedroom compared to those who are ahead of their grade level (36% vs. 24%).

Finally, when motivating their children do homework, parents of children who are behind their grade level are more likely than parents of children above grade level to remind their child of the long term benefits of doing homework (23% vs. 11%) or reward him or her with privileges (20% vs. 6%). On the other hand, parents of children who are ahead of their grade level are more likely than parents of children below grade level to say that their child is self-motivated (26% vs. 3%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid/Kumon telephone survey conducted from August 17-29th 2005. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 Canadian parents who have children 7 to 14 years of age that attend public schools and do not have learning disabilities or special education needs was interviewed. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had this entire population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings

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of the survey population—parents of children ahead of the grade (n=395, +/-4.9%), right at grade level (n=531, +/-4.3%), behind grade level (n=73, +/-11.5%). For the survey parents were asked to reflect back on the past school year. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Homework Routines, Support, And Distractions

As a whole, 81% of parents say their children have a homework routine (versus 19% who do not).

- 88% of Children who are ahead of their grade level have a homework routine, 78% of those at grade level have a routine, and 59% of those behind have a routine.

As a whole, parents say their child spends a mean average of 3.5 hours per week on homework.

- Children ahead of grade level spend an average of 3.7 hours per week on homework, children right at grade level spend 3.3 hours, and children behind grade level spend an average of 3.8 hours per week on homework.

The most common areas to receive help are math (41%) and Language Arts (29%), with others being cited by fewer than 10% of parents. Four in ten (41%) parents say their child doesn't receive help in any school subjects.

- 61% of children who are behind their grade level have received help in Math (versus 28% of those ahead of the grade and 48% of those at grade level).



- 57% of children below the grade have received help in Language Arts (versus 17% of those ahead of the grade and 34% of those at grade level).
- 58% of children who are ahead of their grade have not received help in any subject at all (versus 32% of those at grade level and 16% of those behind).

When it comes to helping with homework, mom and dad are above all others, with mom helping 71% of the time and dad helping 18% of the time. Availability (69%) is the top reasons why mom helps most often, while the top reason for turning to dad is that he has more capacity in the subject (51%).

Six in ten (61%) parents say it is more common for their child to ask for homework help, while 37% indicate that they initiate the help.

- 68% of children who perform well academically ask for help with homework (versus 59% of those at grade level and 42% of those behind grade level).

Most (82%) children face distractions of some sort when doing their homework. Asked which distraction is the biggest, siblings top the list (28%). Other “biggest” distractions include TV shows (20%), people talking/walking (14%), and telephone calls (11%). All other mentions were cited by 5% of parents or fewer.

- 22% of parents of children who are ahead of their grade level say their child faces no distractions when doing his or her homework compared to 15% of children at grade level, and 10% of parents of children who are behind their grade level.

Among all children, 35% have a television in their room, 28% have videogames or a video game console, 27% have a VCR or DVD player, and 19% have a telephone.

- 50% of children who are behind their grade level have a TV in their bedroom (versus 33% ahead of grade level and 35% at grade level).

Rewards, Consequences, And Motivators

Eight in ten (80%) parents offer rewards for good grades. Among those given most frequently, verbal praise tops the list (48%). Other rewards include non-monetary gifts (17%), money (14%), and an event/outing (13%). All other mentions were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents.

Six in ten (61%) parents indicate that there are consequences if their child brings home poor grades. Loss of privileges tops the list for consequence used most frequently (40%). Other consequences include study time (20%), a verbal lecture (17%), and grounding (9%). All other mentions were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents.

Parents have many ways of motivating their child to do their homework: Encouragement/praise (17%), take away privileges (14%), participate in the homework (12%), remind them of the benefits (12%), reward them (9%), and make it part of the daily routine (7%) were the top motivators. Other responses include “my child is self-motivated” (16%), “it’s an expectation/rule” (16%), and “I just tell him/her to do it” (8%).

- 23% of parents of children who are behind their grade level remind their child of the long term benefits of doing homework (versus 11% of parents ahead of the grade or at the grade level).



- 20% of parents of children who are behind their grade level reward him or her with privileges (versus 6% of parents ahead of the grade and 11% at the grade level).
- 26% of parents of children who are ahead of their grade level say that their child is self-motivated (versus 11% of those at the grade level and 3% below the grade level).

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