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FAMILIES

It's up to parents to encourage good study habits: experts

BY NANCY DEVINE
Special to the Economist & Sun/Tribune

The school day doesn't end at the 3:05 bell. For most students, from kindergarten on, homework factors largely into the school day. Although many students try to avoid it, homework is an integral part of the educational process. It helps them understand and review the work covered in class; it helps the teacher determine if students understand class work and it helps students learn how to find and use information. It is also a primary link between school and home.

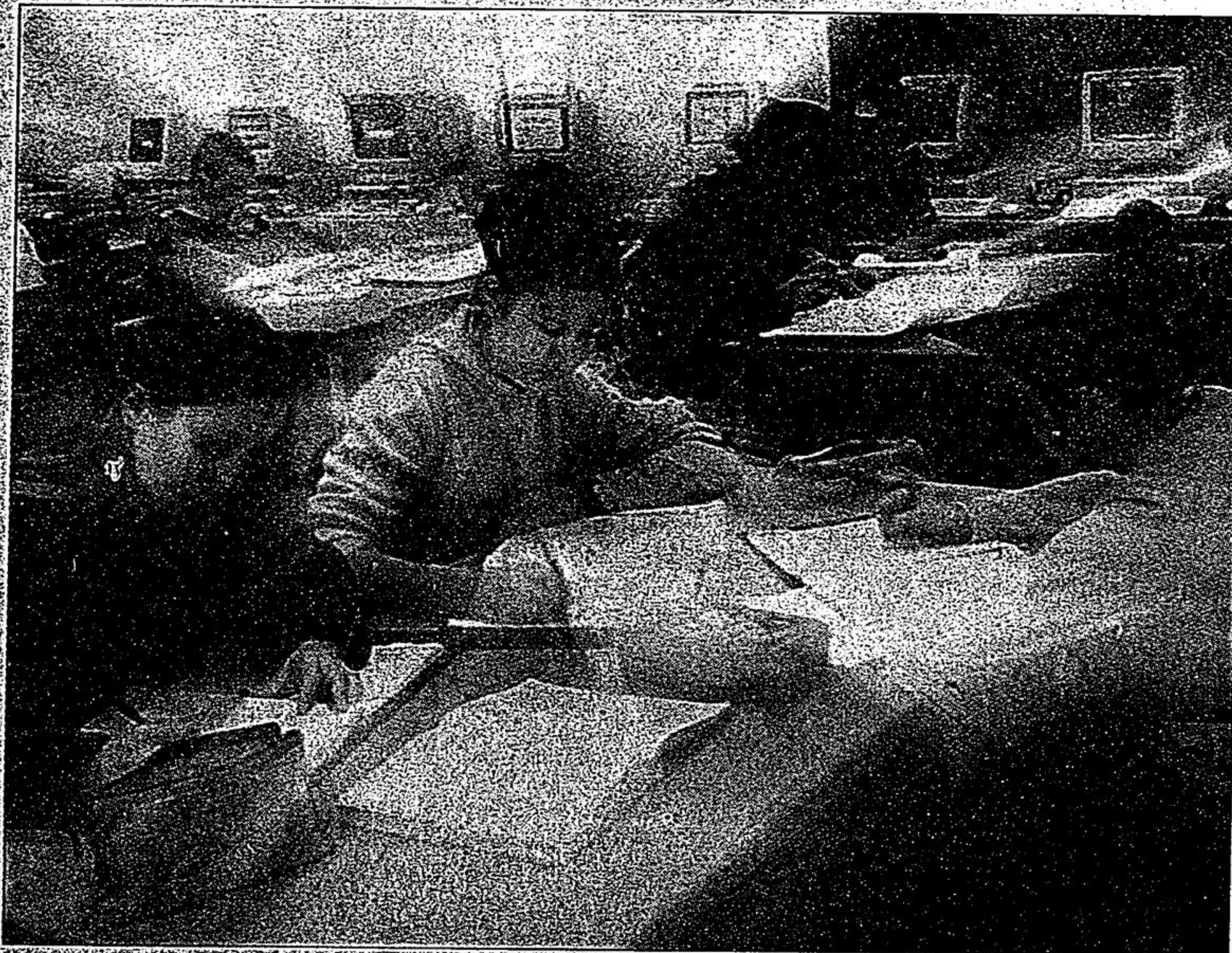
Be sure the child understands homework is his or her responsibility, but you are there to provide help.

Most educators agree that for children in kindergarten to Grade 2, 10 minutes of homework is effective. Children in grades 3 to 6 can handle about 30 minutes to one hour daily. From Grade 7 on, the amount of work varies by subject.

Also, older students often have research papers and oral reports with deadlines that seem weeks away. They need help organizing and planning assignments to complete them on time.

Auriol Rappin, a tutor who runs Back to Basics in Sharon, says the continuing inability to understand and complete homework is often what brings parents to her.

"If the homework is quite often work that was not completed in class, then you have to suspect something else is going on," says Rappin, who has taught at both the elementary and sec-



From left, Aurora High School students Kirsten Fries, Holly Wnoch and Rachel Slaven catch up on their homework in the library. Experts claim homework is an integral part of the education process.

STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

PARENTS, do your homework

ondary levels. "Then, when they are having trouble getting it done at home, you have to start to suspect they didn't get the basic instructions."

When a tutor is involved, she says, it is also important to involve the child's teacher in the learning process. That way, everyone is reading from the same page — each playing a role in helping the student learn.

Usually, when there is trouble in getting homework done, the

parents feel very frustrated and then the yelling starts," she says. "The kids, of course, get frustrated and then nothing gets done. Or the parents give up and do the homework themselves."

The bottom line is no one learns anything and homework becomes an odious chore instead of an opportunity for learning.

A recent *Châtelaine* magazine poll of Canadian children and their parents found 41 per cent of parents surveyed said they help

out every night and 28 per cent of the children said they get help every night.

Canadian parents might overestimate the amount of time they spend helping with homework, but they do have a part in encouraging good study habits by establishing homework routines early, starting in kindergarten.

Here are some guidelines to

See ROUTINE, page 18.

REVIEW

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
Avon Books 1999 (20th anniversary edition) 286 pages, paperback, \$19.95

BY CAROL COOPER
Special to The Economist & Sun/Tribune

Homework time or any other time can be an exercise in frustration for parents of children who don't listen.

Getting kids to listen, translation — getting them to do what their parents want them to — is a classic child-rearing problem.

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk offers purple-faced parents advice in kid communication.

In their very personal style, authors, mothers and communication experts Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, admit they attended a parent group in desperation after being worn down by the defiance of their own children.

There, they learned the basics on which they built the book, the connection between how children feel and how they behave.

When parents acknowledge children's feelings, the authors say, the kids feel right and behave right.

They tell you how to make it happen — after they trot you through exercises designed to raise awareness of and sensitivity to different communication methods.

First of all, parents must really listen to their kids. Hang back when your kids talk. Questions and blame interfere with kids' thinking and their ability to communicate, they say.

And if parents offer their children advice, they deprive their children of the opportunity to seek their own solutions.

Then the authors explain how to get kids to listen to their parents. It's self-awareness time again: How do you talk to your kids? What are the alternatives to endless lecturing, nagging and name-calling?

All chapters deliver nuggets of wisdom in a standard, varied fashion: dialogues, role-plays, written exercises, cartoons, sidebars, questions and comments.

Despite being a classic, the book does have a few shortcomings. It lacks a bibliography and has too many testimonials.

After studying this book, parents can make homework time quality time. It's a matter of listening.

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