

## Quality or Quantity

**W**e live in a “more is better” world: Big Macs, 64-ounce soft drinks and all-you-can-eat buffets. Even discount department stores force you to buy 24 mediocre pens instead of one or two good ones.

Often, when people can’t identify quality or understand the essence of something, quantity replaces quality. Would you trade three average vacations for one, unbelievably great, once-in-a-lifetime experience? Of course not. When we understand the essence, the meaning of a vacation,

### *Are students any smarter since we tripled the weight of the average textbook?*

we will always pick quality time over more time. It seems, however, in education, we strive for the mundane, the superficial, the Big Mac.

We think, if our children are doing more homework, they must be learning more. The truth is: they are probably learning less than they could.

What is the rationale for giving 50 math problems for homework, all virtually the same problem? Quantity. Why not two or three very creative problems that will cause the student to think? Quality.

Parents often ask their children, “Did you finish your homework?” as if it were a chore – something to get done, to get out of the way. What’s wrong here?

Well, most of the time, homework should be used for studying, for reviewing, and for delving deeper into the subject. That takes away the “task” element from the work.

In many cases, homework is nothing more than busy work, and, in some cases, homework may be used as a punishment. The homework assignment should engage the student – cause the student to be curious, to want to learn. It shouldn’t mimic piecemeal factory work.

Incredible, but can you blame them? They feel, most of the time, that the work is boring, repetitive, numbing and often meaningless.

No doubt, in life, we all have to do things that are boring, but true education is inspiring, interesting and satisfying. It’s the quality of the learning that counts.

Even the size of a high school textbook reflects the quantity over quality syndrome. An average textbook weighs as much as a shot put; and when there are five or six of them in a backpack, it makes for a grueling trip down the halls.

What’s in these textbooks? A lot: thousands of words, pictures problems and lessons. Are students

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Creative teachers, on the other hand, are creating their own lessons, which often involve individual plans

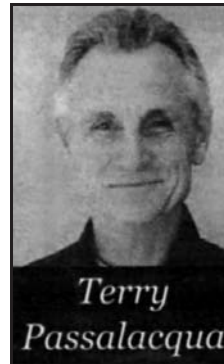
for students – they use the text as a source, not a dead weight. That’s quality thinking.

Modern education, however, places value on the completion of a project or assignment, instead of rewarding mastery of the subject. It would be as if a basketball coach told his player in practice to shoot

50 baskets. “I don’t care if the ball hits the rim or not. I don’t care if you just throw the ball up in the air – just complete the assignment.”

Quantity breeds mediocrity. Quality, in education, leads to success and, as all parents know, success breeds motivation.

Self-motivation, success and an education that provides quality experiences – isn’t this, in the end, what we all want for our children?



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