

PUTTING THE “Home” BACK IN HOMEWORK



As part of our partnership with the home, schools can help put the “home” back in homework by having a clearly defined homework policy for parents and identifying the important role that parents can play in the success of their child in school. Teachers need to design homework activities that can stretch student thinking and help them apply what they have learned to real-life situations, while helping busy families experience an enjoyable time together.

Home assignments need to challenge students to think, reason and apply skills to specific situations. Periodically assignments should provide students practice and drill on specific learning’s, but if all homework assignments consisted of skill and drill, then homework would become a chore and not a powerful learning experience. Homework assignments need to avoid activities that can create power struggles between parent and student that could end in family conflict and tears. Thought-provoking “family” homework assignments can create opportunities for family interaction, discussion and dialogue and help parents discover what their children know and think. The school’s homework philosophy should be clearly stated and shared with parents. It needs to be consistent from classroom to classroom at each grade level. Emphasis should be on the QUALITY of homework experience rather than the QUANTITY of work.

HOMework PHILOSOPHY BROUChURE

Homework is an integral parent of the educational process. In addition to reinforcing specific subjects in the classroom curriculum, homework can and should be used to:

- Develop responsibility and good study habits
- Encourage growth of the individual student to his/her full potential
- Enhance communication skills
- Apply knowledge to real-life situations in a meaningful way
- Logically connect or challenge facts and ideas
- Provide each student an opportunity to develop independent judgment
- Think critically and problem solve

The assignment of homework serves several purposes. It provides opportunities for students to reinforce and practice newly acquainted skills or apply recent learning’s to real-life situations. Homework may also consist of assignments that help students prepare for class preparation. Extended homework assignments provide students the opportunity to apply time management and organization skills in order to monitor and complete within the allotted time frame.

Equally important and often overlooked is the important fact that homework is an exercise in developing responsibility and good study habits. These are skills that are essential to students being successful in school, as well as later in life. Accepting the responsibilities related to homework means the student needs to independently take direction, manage time, and complete the work to the best of his or her ability. Homework is about learning to make choices about when to do homework, how to do homework, where to do homework, and when to turn it in.

Homework assignments should be meaningful and clearly explained to students. Instructional materials must be clearly legible. Required written assignments should be collected, evaluated, and returned in a timely manner with appropriate comments. Teachers should avoid placing excessive emphasis on grading homework assignments because grades should

reflect demonstrable achievement under controlled conditions. Sometimes homework reflects more of the parents' involvement than the student's. The question of the role of homework and its impact on the family can result in different points of view. Some parents feel that schools do not assign enough homework. They expect more homework so they can help their children be more successful in school. They believe that homework helps reinforce the basic skills and develop good study habits. Some parents feel there are excessive amounts of assigned homework, which often conflict with other family priorities. Their children are often involved in after-school activities such as sports, religious instruction, private lessons, scouts and/ or other organized activities. Other parents see homework as a nightly battleground that ends in tears and frustration. Each family must confront the issues and determine where homework requirements and expectations fit into their lifestyle and values.

Parent support of homework is an extremely important factor towards building positive attitudes and successful study habits. Parent interest in schoolwork reflects their belief that what their child is doing is important and that school is a family priority. It is evident that student, teacher, and parent needs and expectations vary. Therefore, flexibility must exist in the assignment of homework. Time requirements are difficult to establish because of the wide variation of reading and work speeds. There should in general be an evolutionary growth in student homework requirements between grades K-12, and consistency should be maintained throughout the school, from teacher to teacher to grade to grade.

Beyond these guidelines, but in keeping with the positive role that homework should provide, the following parameters are established as general guidelines (rather than as limits or requirements) in terms of the time spent by students:

- In grades K-1, homework should not normally exceed an average of 10-20 minutes per day
- In grades 2-3, homework should not normally exceed an average of 20-30 minutes per day.
- In grades 4-5, homework should not normally exceed an average of 30-40 minutes per day.
- In middle school students, homework should not normally exceed 1-2 hours per academic subject per week.
- For high school students, homework should not normally exceed 2-3 hours per academic subject per week.

THE PURPOSE OF HOMEWORK

1. Homework develops responsibility.
2. Homework builds good self-discipline and stimulates pride in work.
3. Homework prepares students for classroom participation and activities.
4. Homework develops independent study habits.
5. Homework reinforces and extends school learning experiences, and provides practice, review and application of basic skills
6. Homework provides a structure for reaching closure on the skills and knowledge taught in the classroom
7. Homework lays the foundation for students taking responsibility for their own learning.
8. Homework develops organizational and time management skills
9. Homework stimulates creativity and imagination while fostering student initiative.
10. Homework stimulates critical thinking and problem solving.
11. Homework provides for the application of learning to real-life situations.
12. Homework provides practice, review and application of basic skills

TYPES OF HOMEWORK

Homework may be assigned or student selected on a daily, weekly or long –term basis from either of the homework categories given below.

Assigned Homework. Assigned homework is homework that has been assigned by the teacher as is to be completed, turned in by a specific date, assessed by the teacher and returned with appropriate comments or marks. Assessment criteria and comments will vary, depending on the purpose of the assignment.

Assignments may include such activities as:

1. Spelling contracts
2. Vocabulary study
3. Handwriting practice
4. Research Skills (note-taking, clustering, outlining)
5. Research reports and projects
6. Book reports
7. Completion of work missed due to absence
8. Proof-reading activities
9. Math application problems
10. Reading, writing and thinking experiences throughout curriculum
11. Social Studies, Science and Health Assignments
12. Current event activities
13. Discussion topics
14. Preparation for classroom activities
15. Study and review for quizzes and tests
16. Problem solving activities
17. Fine art activities
18. Math practice sheets
19. Assignments that have been started in class, but do not require explanation or help to complete.

HOMEWORK: HOME AND SCHOOL WORKING TOGETHER

A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENTS:

1. Write down all homework assignments and due dates before leaving class. Use a notebook or folder to copy and keep all your assignments and due dates before leaving class. Use a notebook or folder to copy and keep all your assignments.
2. Make sure you fully understand the assignment and the concepts to be practiced or applied. Ask your teacher to explain again if you're not sure.
3. Organized your materials. Be sure to take home your homework assignments and all necessary materials. (textbooks, special supplies, etc.).
4. Demonstrate good study habits by budgeting the necessary time to complete the assignment.
5. Demonstrate pride in your homework by doing your best work and working independently. Ask for assistance only after giving it your best.
6. Demonstrate responsibility by finishing your homework neatly.
7. Place your completed homework in a spot where you will see it before you leave for school and not forget it.
8. Be sure you turn your homework in on time.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENTS:

1. Demonstrate that homework is a priority in your family by establishing a regular time to develop a daily “homework habit”. If there are no homework assignments to complete then encourage your student to utilize this “quiet time” daily for pleasure reading. This reading could be done silently or orally as a shared experience.
2. Parents should provide the support and supervision necessary to see that their child organizes and completes homework from return on the due date.
3. Avoid family arguments or power struggles over homework. If a conflict occurs please send a note to the teacher with the uncompleted homework explaining the problem. If continuing problems occur regarding homework assignments (such as; homework takes too long, is too difficult, or creates tremendous frustration) please contact your child’s teacher.
4. Arrange a quiet environment for homework that is in a private, personal area, rather than a “public” area like the family room or kitchen. Provide a table or desk, chair, proper lighting and an area free from distractions such as radio, television, phone or conversations.
5. Parents should be available to assist students with homework, but their proper role is that of consultant. Parents should not complete the assignment for their child. Parents who participate in the “actual doing: of their child’s homework dilute whatever academic learning was intended, but more importantly, cause the child to become dependent upon their parents continued presence and help where homework is concerned.
6. Teach independence by encouraging your child to preserve and complete the assignment without assistance. If your child has given his/her all and still is stuck, then step in as a consultant. Help should be brief! Parents can give examples, clarify directions, and provide guidance and support, but should not actually do any of the homework for their child. Parents should be available to help only if the student asks of his or her own initiative, resisting the urge to interrupt or ask, “Need any help?” There will be specific homework assignments that require parent participation and then family involvement is appropriate.
7. Encourage your child to report progress to you on long-term assignments. Help them divide the project into manageable segments and have them report their progress along the way.
8. Expect and encourage your child to do his/her best and neatness work.
9. Encourage your child to report their progress to you on long-term assignments.
10. Encourage reading for pleasure. Either read to your child or provide a time everyday for pleasure reading.
11. Recognize that, since children have different needs, abilities, and interests, homework assignments will be given accordingly.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHER:

1. Plan homework that provides practice, preparation, extension or application and is directly an outgrowth of skills taught in the classroom.
2. Make sure assignments are meaningful and clearly explained to the students.
3. Collect all homework assignments, check for learning and return to students regularly with appropriate comments or marks.
4. Check on progress of long-term assignments.
5. Recognize and reward students who successfully and consistently complete and turn in their homework assignments.
6. Reinforce good study habits and responsibilities by informing parents when a student fails to complete homework assignments through phone calls, homework alerts, or parent notes home from teacher or principal.
7. Homework should not be assigned so as to deprive children of adequate time from necessary recreation, free-play or other out-of-school activities
8. Teach students how to apply effective study skills and implement organizational and time management skills.
9. Maintain high expectations of performance on all work assigned.

PARENT SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL

Homework is an integral part of your child's educational process. Homework brings the school and home closer together. As the school and home share most of the responsibility for education in the years ahead, cooperation between home and school is even more imperative to develop a sound and sensible educational program for the student.

Parent support and supervision of homework is an extremely important factor in building positive attitudes and study habits regarding homework. The following suggestions are designed to facilitate our student's learning responsibility for homework without incurring family conflicts:

1. Homework provides the opportunity for practice and application of academic skills. However, homework is also an exercise in accepting responsibility, postponing reinforcement, perseverance and independent accomplishment. For all those reasons, it's even more important that the student do it with little help from his/her parents.
2. Parents can, and sometimes should, be available to help with homework. When they do it should be for one of two reasons:
 - First, because the child is stuck at some point, has given it his/her all, and legitimately needs adult guidance to get un-stuck.
 - Secondly, because she/he finished the homework, but wants someone to review or proofread it.

In helping with homework the proper role for parents is that of consultant, not participant, and a fine line divides the one from the other. When parents help a student with homework, the help should be brief. Parents can give examples, clarify directions, and provide guidance and encouragement, but should not actually do any of the student's homework. Parents who participant in the "actual doing" of homework to only dilute whatever academic learning was intended, but also, an more importantly, cause the student to become dependent upon their continued presence and help where homework is concerned.

3. If parents feel their child is asking for help simply because he's wanting attention or wants someone else to do his thinking for him, they should not hesitate to say, "I am sure you can think that one through on your own. Stick with it!"
4. Parents may need to set an upper limit time on homework. The super-conscientious student, wanting to turn in the "perfect" paper, may spend an inappropriate amount to time on homework. The student who is slow or has a learning problem may struggle for too long a time to finish the assignment. The student may be responsible for deciding when to begin, but parents should decide when to call time. The deadline should be consistent, say 7:30 P.M. everyday, but can be temporarily suspended for special projects or assignments. The shortest route to a nightly never-ending homework marathon is to tell the child when to begin, but not when he/she must be done.
5. Completion of homework is the student's responsibility. Parents need to let their child learn responsibility by experiencing the consequences at school for failure to complete the assigned homework on time. Parents should also decide upon an appropriate consequence at home also.
6. When working with your child on homework, maintaining a realized, stress-free atmosphere will help to build positive attitudes, about schoolwork and keep harmony in the family.

STUDENT / PARENT HOMEWORK INVENTORY SHEET

Student Name: _____

Dear Parents:

Please confer with your child and have him/her complete the following inventory on homework study skills and return it to your child's teacher. Thank You!

1. I understand that it is important to write down my homework assignments because:

2. I understand that it is important to bring home all materials I will need to complete my assignments because:

3. It is important to schedule for each day a regular time to complete my homework because:

4. I have arranged to do my homework in a quiet place. which is located:

5. It is important to budget enough time to complete all homework assignments because:

6. I am proud of my homework when I:

7. When I turn my completed homework in on time I feel:

8. I feel it is important to proof-read my work because:

9. I have a special place to put my completed homework so I won't forget to take it to school. It is located:

10. On days when I have no specific homework assignment, I will use my regularly scheduled time for homework to:

Student Signature

Parent Signature