

HOMEWORK PROGRAM

JANUARY, 2002

HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Well chosen, clearly communicated homework is an integral part of the instructional process. Challenging homework assignments help students learn. Homework that reinforces, enriches, and enhances instruction encourages families to become more involved with education. It also causes students to work independently and to become more responsible for their own achievements.

Homework assignments review, reinforce, or extend classroom learning by providing practice and application of knowledge gained; homework assignments teach students responsibility and organizational skills; homework assignments promote wise and orderly use of time; and homework assignments provide opportunities for enrichment activities.

Teachers and principals will develop strategies of instruction to include homework appropriate for the students and their educational needs. The strategies will consider assignments of other teachers, individual differences in students, and other factors that may affect the home as an extension of the classroom.

DEFINITION OF HOMEWORK

Homework is an academic assignment or learning activity that relates to the school curriculum and is to be completed outside of class.

PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK STATEMENT

Homework is an academic assignment or learning activity that relates to the school curriculum and is to be completed outside of class. Teachers will assign homework on an increasing basis from grade one through eight. In making such assignments, teachers assume the responsibility for its appropriateness in terms of the child's abilities and constraints. Parents may assist by helping their children understand the work and by expecting them to complete their assignments on time. As students progress through various grade levels, there should be a greater expectation for students to handle more homework. A reasonable guideline is that each school night students should complete 10 minutes of homework multiplied by their grade level plus the prescribed, nightly Reading Renaissance reading. A second-grade student should have 20 minutes of homework plus their Reading Renaissance reading, and an eighth-grader should have 80 minutes of homework plus their Reading Renaissance reading.

PURPOSE OF HOMEWORK

Educators who have studied the issue of homework have found that when teachers assign homework, they:

- Extend classroom learning, increase the amount of learned content and provide reinforcement.
- Help students synthesize and integrate what they've learned.
- Provide opportunities for learning from different sources.
- Allow students who work at a slower rate to complete unfinished work.
- Provide a means for absent students to make up assignments.
- Save class time and extend the curriculum by having students read materials at home to be discussed in class.
- Can check on the students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Challenge and promote creativity.
- Help students develop study habits and skills of concentration.
- Encourage student self-discipline and responsibility.
- Help students learn how to manage time.
- Provide a link between school and home, giving parents an opportunity to be informed about their child's progress.

DISTRICT-WIDE HOMEWORK PROCEDURES

For every class, each student in grades 3 through 8 will be required to carry and use an assignment notebook that provides space for noting assignments, recording long-term projects, due dates, and a check-off for completed assignments.

Each building principal shall work with the staff to present information each year to parents on proper study habits and on appropriate ways to work with their children in managing homework.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The teacher shall be responsible for clearly stating during class the assignment, the purpose of the assignment, and the due date for the assignment.

The teacher shall be responsible for writing the assignment on the board.

The teacher shall be responsible for supervising to see that all students record the assignment in their assignment notebooks.

Teachers annually shall establish classroom homework policies and procedures, file a written description of their policies and procedures with the principal, fully explain their policies and procedures to students, and communicate their policies and procedures to parents. This communication should take place at the beginning of the school year. (The District #87 *Teacher's Homework Policy & Procedures* Form could be used to describe the classroom homework policy for the principal, and a version of the Sample Homework Policy Letter could be used to communicate with parents.)

At the middle school the principal shall be responsible for establishing procedures that provide for an even distribution of major assignments and tests so that students are not burdened on any particular night with an unreasonable homework load. (A large calendar in the staff room for noting major assignments and tests by section would be appropriate.)

Teachers shall be responsible for notifying parents if a student consistently fails to do homework.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students shall record all homework assignments and long-term projects in their homework assignment notebooks.

Students shall complete all assignments fully, neatly, and on time.

Students shall review their completed assignments with a parent and have a parent note their assignments as completed by checking them off in the student's assignment notebook.

Students shall report to every class with their assignment notebook and take it home each day for parent review.

Students should plan ahead and not wait until the last minute to do long-range assignments.

Students are expected to ask questions and discuss with the teacher any problems they may be having with school work.

Students are to make up all work missed during an absence.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents shall be responsible for spending a few minutes each evening reviewing completed homework assignments and noting completed assignments by checking them off in the assignment notebooks.

Parents shall be responsible for contacting teachers whenever there is a question about assignments or a concern about a child's progress in a particular class.

Parents should encourage and support the child's efforts and be available for questions, being careful to remember that homework is the child's responsibility, not the parent's.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework should never be busy work or assigned as a punishment.

Homework should be evaluated for accuracy and quality and assigned credit, points, or a grade.

Students should lose credit or receive lowered grades for failing to complete homework.

Homework assignments should have direct application to classroom studies and be directly related to instructional objectives.

When students check their own work or when work is checked by classmates in such situations as cooperative learning, proper instructions and guidelines are to be given, and the teacher must review the work and assign a grade, if, indeed, a grade is to be assigned. Students are not to be responsible for grading or reporting on their classmates' homework.

Teachers should offer positive support and reinforcement for completed homework.

Homework should be individualized when possible. This allows for additional practice in skill areas where support is needed and enables students to pursue study in areas of personal interest.

Long-range assignments should have built-in checkpoints, and teachers should help students organize the assignment in a manner that will result in steady progress toward completion of the long-range project.

HOMEWORK PROGRAM (January, 2002)

As students progress through various grade levels, there should be a greater expectation for students to handle more homework. A reasonable guideline is that each school night students should complete 10 minutes of homework multiplied by their grade level.

Grade One	10 Minutes
Grade Two	20 Minutes
Grade Three	30 Minutes
Grade Four	40 Minutes
Grade Five	50 Minutes
Grade Six	60 Minutes
Grade Seven	70 Minutes
Grade Eight	80 Minutes

(It is recommended that homework in grades one and two should consist of low-impact, low-pressure work involving reading or activities that involve parents. The benefit of homework at these grade levels is that it helps students to establish a homework habit, and it also serves to establish an early pattern of parent involvement.)

The nightly reading students are to do for the Reading Renaissance program at grades 2-8 is to be considered above and beyond the 10-minutes-per-grade-level guideline. Any summary writing or vocabulary work required as a part of the Reading Renaissance homework reading is to be done within the required Reading Renaissance homework reading minutes. Reading Renaissance homework reading is to be considered “quasi-homework” in that a goal of the district’s literacy program is to develop within students a love of reading, to instill within students the daily habit of reading, and to develop life-long readers. The Reading Renaissance homework is to be leisure reading completed to improve students’ reading skills while at the same time promoting positive reading habits.

Extremely easy or frivolous homework should not be given as a means of inflating grades.

Teachers should not stop giving homework because students will not do it. Lowered expectations will result in lower performance. At the very least, assigned homework will benefit those students who do complete it.

Don’t overdo drill assignments. Keep in mind that students who already grasp a concept don’t need the practice, and would be better served and challenged by other types of homework. Likewise, students who don’t understand a concept will just be reinforcing errors.

TYPES OF HOMEWORK

There are four general types of homework: preparation, practice, extension, and creativity. Each type has its own purpose, and teachers should develop their homework assignments with one of those purposes in mind.

Preparation Homework (getting ready before) helps students inform themselves about the next day's lesson. For example, students may be asked to:

- Write their own class discussion questions based on their reading.
- Read about the upcoming election in the newspaper and list three issues that the candidates are discussing.
- Complete a take-home, open-book pretest that covers materials from the upcoming lessons.
- Watch the program Tornado on Channel 5 tonight. Be prepared to talk about one measure your family can take at home to prepare themselves for a tornado.

Practice Homework (doing again after) provides students with the needed review and reinforcement about material presented in a previous lesson. For example:

- After a grammar lesson, students write their own sentences and then label the various elements of these sentences.
- After reading a story, students write a new logical ending to the story and explain why the ending is appropriate.
- After studying a specific period of recent history, students ask their parents about their experiences and reactions to that time period.
- After studying nutrition, students read the labels on a variety of foods at home and report their findings with regard to the fat content, salt, calories, etc.

Extension Homework (going beyond) guides students so they expand on concepts that were taught in class. Various approaches to extension homework include:

- After a math unit, students might measure all the rooms of their home and determine the square footage.
- Students might develop a food budget for a family of four. They would then collect newspaper grocery ads to verify prices of what they will buy.
- Students could write down everything they eat for a week. At the end of the week the class will compare and evaluate eating habits.

Creative Homework (putting together) includes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This type of homework is inventive and resourceful. Students come up with their own ideas related to a class topic and then share those ideas with the class. Several suggested creative homework ideas include the following:

- Students create a new invention that they would like to see made.
- Students create a comic strip that incorporates the lesson topic.
- Students make miniature buildings that reflect the architecture of specific time periods.
- Students formulate a new product that fills a human need and develop an advertising campaign for the product.

RESOURCES

The following materials are excellent resources for teachers in developing homework policies and procedures and for working with students and parents in making homework an effective component of the educational system. All materials are in the professional resources section of each school library and are also available from:

Lee Canter & Associates
P.O. Box 2113
Santa Monica, California 90406

#CA1205	Homework Without Tears--Parent Guide
#CA1211	Homework Without Tears for Teachers, Gr. 1-3
#CA1212	Homework Without Tears for Teachers, Gr. 4-6
#CA1213	Homework Without Tears for Teachers, Gr. 7-12
#CA1223	Homework Organizer for Students
#CA1225	Homework Motivators, Gr. 1-6
#CA1231	Creative Homework, Gr. 1-3
#CA1232	Creative Homework, Gr. 4-6
#CA1233	Creative Homework, Gr. 7-12
#CA1241	Practice Homework, Gr. 1-3
#CA1242	Practice Homework, Gr. 4-6
#CA1290	Good Homework Habits Poster, Gr. 1-6

Another valuable homework resource is Winning the Homework War by Fredric Levine and Kathleen Anesko. The book is an Arco Book published by Prentice Hall Press, 1987, New York.

RESEARCH ON HOMEWORK

Research on homework concludes that:

- Doing homework results in increased achievement and better student attitudes.
- Homework affects learning three times as much as socio-economic status.
- Benefits are twice as great if students receive teacher feedback on their assignments. When teachers grade and/or comment on homework, student achievement rises from the 50th to the 79th percentile.
- Positive effects of homework for both elementary and secondary students are significant and consistent.
- On the average, assigned homework raises the typical student's performance from the 50th to the 60th percentile.
- Daily homework shows greater positive effects than sporadic assignments.
- Homework benefits lower and middle socio-economic groups equally.
- When no homework is assigned in one grade, students' performance in later grades suffers.
- Routine drill is of limited value.
- Short assignments are as effective as long assignments.

TEACHER'S HOMEWORK POLICY & PROCEDURES

Teacher _____

School _____

What types of homework will be assigned?

How often will homework be assigned?

What guidelines will you give students for completing homework?

How will you positively reinforce students who complete homework?

What consequences will you impose when students do not complete homework?

What are your procedures for make-up work?

How will homework affect a student's grade?

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

Dear Parent,

I believe homework is important because it is a valuable aid in helping students make the most of their experience in school. I give homework because it is useful in reinforcing what has been learned in class, preparing students for upcoming lessons, extending and generalizing concepts, teaching responsibility, and helping students develop positive study habits.

I will assign homework every school night. Homework should take students no more than one hour to complete each night, not including the nightly reading a student is to do for the Reading Renaissance program. I will give students at least one week's notice to study for all tests, and one written report will be assigned each grading period.

I expect students to do their best on homework. I expect homework to be neat, not sloppy. I expect students to do the work on their own and only ask for help after they have given it their best effort.

I will check all homework. I strongly believe in the value positive support plays in motivating children to develop good study habits. I will give students praise and other incentives when they do their homework.

Students are also required to carry and use an assignment notebook. All daily assignments, tests, long-range projects, and due dates will be recorded in this notebook. I would ask you as a parent to review your child's assignments each night and initial the assignment book to note your child's completion of each assignment. I will also write periodic notes to you in the assignment book. If there is a problem with your child completing homework, I will call you to discuss the concern. Also, please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss questions you may have about homework.

If there is a legitimate reason why a student is not able to finish homework, the parent must send a note to me on the day the homework is due stating the reason it was not completed. The note must be signed by the parent.

I feel that parents are the key to making homework a positive experience for their children. Therefore, I ask that parents make homework a top priority, provide necessary supplies and a quiet homework environment, set a daily homework time, provide praise and support, and not let children avoid homework.

Parents should help their children with homework if a problem arises, but only after children have tried their best to solve it on their own. Parents should not do homework for their children.

I am looking forward to a very positive and productive year in working with you and your child. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions regarding the homework policy or any other matter.

Yours sincerely,

***HOMEWORK PROGRAM
(January, 2002)***

HOMEWORK PROGRAM
(January, 2002)