

School **COMMUNITY NETWORK**

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Homework Guidelines



Homework Guidelines

Definitions and Goals

Homework. Work assigned by a teacher that is done outside the regular school day.

Studying at Home. “Studying at home” is a phrase used to describe all instances of a child’s studying at home, including but not limited to assigned homework. Parents can contribute to the child’s habit of study and acquisition of knowledge by establishing study time at home. During this time, children complete homework and, if homework is finished, continue to read, practice, and study on their own.

Ideally, parents will expect their children to study at home for a period of time each school day, and teachers will consistently assign homework. Thus, the habit of studying is established by both the home and the school. Learning time is extended beyond the regular school day.

Homework Guidelines and Practice

From research, we know that homework is a powerful means for increasing children’s learning. Meta-analyses suggest a positive relationship between homework and achievement, with percentile gains from 8% to 31% (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Marzano & Pickering, 2007). We know that homework helps children form the habits of independent study. We know that homework is the school’s primary extension into the home. We also know that homework is a source of conflict between many parents and children, and homework is a topic of complaint many parents raise against schools.

Families who accept the responsibility for seeing that their children attend to their homework are often perplexed that homework practices vary so widely from teacher to teacher. Parents are confused that some educators tell them that homework is important, but some teachers do not assign it. They find that some teachers grade homework, and some do not. In some classes, homework is counted toward the report card grade, and in some classes it is not. Parents are surprised to hear from their children that they have completed their homework at school. What is homework if it is done at school rather than at home?

Because a school community wants its teachers, families, and students to work in harmony, with clearly understood roles in the education of children, homework is a topic that every school community must address. Because school communities are concerned with children’s habit formation, they know that positive habits are best built with consistent reinforcement from home and school. Independent study is an important habit, and homework can be a strong tool for helping children acquire that habit.

Research (see *Parents and Learning* workshop materials in Education section) on homework tells us that:

- Required homework is more effective than voluntary homework.
- Having no homework assigned at one grade level adversely affects performance at subsequent grade levels.
- Homework is most effective when returned promptly by the teacher with comments and a grade.

We also know that some kinds of homework are more effective than others. Homework is most effective when it is:

- Frequent,
- Directly related to in-class work,
- Used to master rather than introduce new material,
- Graded and included as part of the report card grade, and
- Returned to the student soon after it is collected and marked with comments particular to the student.

A great quantity of homework is not as important as the regular assignment of homework. A rule of thumb is that students should study at home a minimum of 10 minutes per grade level per day, five days per week. Of course, this time expands when students prepare for tests or write major reports.

How can a school community enhance the benefits of homework? The process begins with clear guidelines that state the roles of teachers, families, and students. But policies are no better than the paper they are written on unless:

- The people to which they apply are given assistance in carrying them out, and
- Actual practices are monitored to detect and correct problems.

Studies of homework that included an interactive element requiring children to talk with someone at home about the assignment (and usually have it signed) have shown a variety of significant, positive outcomes, including improved student achievement, increased parent involvement, and better teacher attitudes (Bennett-Conroy, 2012; Van Voorhis, 2011). Homework design matters, too. The task assigned may evoke different types of parental involvement, some more helpful than others; one study found that “more open-ended tasks without clear predetermined procedures might evoke the most beneficial parent–child interaction” (Shumow, 2003, p. 20).

Teachers may need professional development to learn to design effective homework assignments and to establish positive, two-way communication with students’ families (Shumow, 2003; Symeou et al., 2012). Parent meetings or workshops may help supplement tip sheets informing families of the best ways to facilitate their child’s study at home (Priority Schools Campaign, 2011).

What is included in effective homework guidelines?

Elements of Homework Guidelines

Importance.	Explain why homework is important.
Roles.	Clearly state the roles of teachers, parents/families, and students in the assignment and completion of homework.
Frequency.	Provide guidelines for frequency of homework.
Quantity.	Provide guidelines for amount of time students might be expected to spend with homework (this will vary by grade level, and may require coordination across teachers and/or subjects).
Weight.	Establish the weight of homework in determining report card grades.
Correction/Return.	Establish guidelines for prompt return of graded homework to students.

References

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- Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2007). Special topic: The case for and against homework. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 74–79.
- Priority Schools Campaign. (2011). *Family–school–community partnerships 2.0: Collaborative strategies to advance student learning*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Family-School-Community-Partnerships-2.0.pdf>
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- Van Voorhis, F. (2011a). Adding families to the homework equation: A longitudinal study of mathematics achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 43(3), 313–338.

The following is an example of homework guidelines—each School Community Council/school team should develop their own:

Franklin School Community

Homework Guidelines

The purpose of homework should –

- provide practice and reinforce skills presented by the teacher(s)
- broaden areas of interest through enrichment
- provide opportunities for parents/guardians to know what their child is studying
- encourage interaction between parent and child

Teachers assign homework to complement classroom instruction. It should be planned and evaluated with respect to its purpose, appropriateness, and completion time. Homework is most effective when it is checked or graded by the teacher and returned to the student promptly with helpful comments. Each grade level assigns the appropriate weight for homework to a final grade for core subjects. Teachers discuss this during grade level meetings for parents at the beginning of the school year, and at conferences.

Our school community believes that establishing a homework routine is important for student success. Parents can help by providing a consistent homework time in an undisturbed study area, and by being available if the child needs help. As stated in our school community compact, parents should make sure the homework is done and returned to school daily. The homework assignment notebook should be checked to ensure completion of all assignments, and note important dates for testing and projects. Praising the child when homework is completed encourages pride in his or her accomplishments, and motivates the child to continue good effort.

Students that may not have homework on any given day should uphold the routine of doing homework by reading independently, practicing math facts or vocabulary and reviewing content for upcoming quizzes and tests. The homework assignment notebook includes the dates for tests. Students who are absent should make up all necessary homework upon their return.

Time guidelines for homework or study time 5 days per week at the elementary level are as follows:

- Kindergarten – as needed to practice skills and increase parent/child interaction
- First Grade – 10 minutes per night
- Second Grade – 20 minutes per night
- Third Grade – 30 minutes per night
- Fourth Grade – 40 minutes per night
- Fifth Grade – 50 minutes per night

Good study habits in the completion of homework and study time practice will help our students, your children, develop the necessary skills to become lifelong learners.

Discuss and construct homework guidelines that includes the elements of a homework policy listed above. Jot the central ideas on the worksheet. Then develop a full draft of the guidelines.

Homework Guidelines (Worksheet):

Importance: _____

Roles: _____

Frequency: _____

Quantity: _____

Weight: _____

Correction/Return: _____

Parent-Child Interactions for Preschoolers (if applicable): _____

Monitoring Homework

Homework guidelines will benefit children only to the extent that they are carried out. To know how well the guidelines are working, to identify problems, to make necessary adjustments, and to provide training for teachers and parents, you need to know what is really happening with homework in your school. Is homework being consistently assigned? Are students completing homework? Are families encouraging students to complete homework? Which students are having difficulty with homework? How can they be helped?

A simple way to monitor homework is to ask each teacher to submit to the principal a weekly summary of homework assignments made the previous week. This may be done for a month each year, so that results can be compared from year to year. The summary would include:

- Assignments made each day
- Number of students who completed assignments to the satisfaction of the teacher each day
- Number of students who did not complete assignments to the satisfaction of the teacher each day (other than for reasons of excusable absence)

Gathering this information enables monitoring of the effectiveness of the homework guidelines and taking steps to improve them.

Monitoring homework helps draw attention to its importance, for teachers, students, and families.

A form for teachers to report information about homework could look like the one on the following page. Tabulate the results of the teacher reports for the month and prepare a summary report for the school to show parents/families and teachers.

Teacher's Homework Report

Please submit this report to the principal's office each Friday for the week that ended the previous Friday.

Teacher's Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

For Week Beginning (Monday's Date): ____ / ____ / ____

Subject:					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Assignment					
Estimated Time					
Students Completing					
Students Not Completing					
Subject:					
Assignment					
Estimated Time					
Students Completing					
Students Not Completing					
<p>Assignment: Brief description of assigned work. Estimated Time: Time average student would take to complete assignment.</p> <p>Students Completing: Number of students who completed and submitted homework on time.</p> <p>Students Not Completing: Number of students who did not complete and submit homework on time.</p>					

Homework Report

A tabulation of the homework reports prepared by teachers for one month.

Beginning Date: _____

End Date: _____

Total Number of School Days Reported: _____

Homework Assignments : Average Number of Days per Week and Average Estimated Minutes Per Day by Subject and Grade

	Reading		Math		Social Studies		Science		TOTAL		
Grade	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	
K	3.2	5.1	1.1	5.1	.4	4.0	.3	3.9	5.0	18.4	
1	3.4	7.3	2.1	6.4	1.3	5.2	1.6	4.5	8.4	23.4	
2	4.2	11.8	2.3	10.3	1.8	6.8	2.1	6.8	10.7	35.7	
3	4.1	14.3	3.4	8.7	2.2	7.9	2.4	10.7	12.1	41.6	
4	4.4	18.6	3.4	11.8	2.3	9.2	2.4	5.8	12.5	54.4	
5	4.6	20.4	3.7	12.2	2.1	10.8	2.5	9.5	13.2	52.9	
TOTAL	23.9	77.5	16.0	54.5	10.1	43.9	11.6	41.2	61.6	217.1	

Homework Assignments: Total Assignments and Percent Completed by Subject and Grade

	Reading		Math		Social Studies		Science		TOTAL	
Grade	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed
K	24	96%	14	92%	8	96%	7	97%	53	95.3%
1	36	94%	18	93%	10	94%	9	95%	73	94.0%
2	42	95%	22	93%	10	96%	9	96%	83	95.0%
3	46	97%	28	89%	14	95%	15	89%	103	92.5%
4	51	92%	28	87%	14	94%	18	84%	111	89.2%
5	58	91%	31	85%	12	97%	20	81%	121	90.0%
TOTAL	257	94.6%	144	89.8%	68	572	78	90.3%	547	92.6%

Homework Next Steps

What next steps does your team want to take back to the school to make the school's homework guidelines work for the benefit of children's learning?

[illegible]

Homework Guidelines Rubric Worksheet

Elements of effective homework guidelines	Score	Criteria for Scoring The homework guidelines...
Score Guide: 0 = no evidence of criterion being met, 1 = evidence that criterion is met		
1. Importance - Explains why homework is important.		Provides a general explanation of the value of homework in extending learning time and developing independent study habits and skills.
2. Roles - Clearly states the role of teachers, parents/families, and students in the assignment and completion of homework.		Explains what is expected of teachers, parents/families, and students in the assignment and completion of homework.
3. Frequency - Provides guidelines for frequency of homework (e.g., 5 days a week).		Provides guidelines for teachers on how frequently homework should be assigned, which also gives families and students an expectation for the frequency of homework.
4. Quantity - Provides guidelines for amount of time students might be expected to spend on homework (e.g., 10 minutes per grade level).		Provides guidelines for teachers on how much time a student might spend on homework each day, which also gives families and students an expectation for time devoted to homework.
5. Weight - Establishes the weight of the homework in determining report card grades.		Establishes that homework may count for a percentage of the report card grade.
6. Correction/Returns - Establishes guidelines for prompt return of graded and marked homework to students by teachers.		Establishes the importance of teachers marking, grading, and promptly returning homework to enhance its effect on student learning.
Total Score		

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