

The staff met this year to review the most current research on the effects and impact of homework on student learning and “achievement”. We also read articles (see below for links) written both by reporters and educators about the value and purpose of homework. Many of us saw the recent movie “[Race to Nowhere](#)” and we are all very aware, as teachers and parents, of the pressure that our students will face as they enter middle and high school in highly competitive academic settings.

We then reviewed our current practices and modified them where needed. This document is an effort to communicate with clarity and consistency our approach to homework and share why and when we think it is has purpose and merit in our students’ lives. Our homework goals relate to our broader mission of providing our students with a solid foundation of academic, social, and organizational skills in the context of a playful childhood and the fundamental joy and gratification that learning brings. We believe there is a place and time for work begun at school to continue at home as well as interests from home to be explored at school.

For Nursery and Kindergarten children - no homework

We do not assign homework at this age. We expect that parents will be reading to their children daily, using the language of mathematics to describe the world around them, and asking their children higher order thinking questions that can have multiple “right” answers.

For 1st-2nd Graders

What is it?

Homework in the early years (1st and 2nd grade) consists of regular independent reading of books at home and writing a response to the reading. Homework is done with an adult. We value family time and see an additional purpose of homework at this age level as a way to engage the family with school. We also emphasize the importance of a parent/grown-up read aloud (of a book beyond the child’s reading level) paired with authentic conversation.

Why do we do it?

- To instill a LOVE of reading and sense of confidence
- To support emergent readers by giving them the opportunity to engage with reading materials at their independent reading levels.
- To provide parents with an understanding of their child’s reading development and appropriate texts
- To engage in authentic conversations about books
- To support learners who might need extra practice

How does it happen and for how long?

Monday through Thursday all first and second graders choose a book from their leveled basket at school to read at home. In his/her reading response journal, each child records the title of the book and a teacher will write a question about the book, encouraging the reader to make connections, predictions, synthesize

or evaluate. At home, the responses to the questions may be written by the child or a parent may take dictation.

This entire activity should take 15-20 minutes (depending on the length of the text.) If, for whatever reason, a child does not get to their homework, he/she should understand that it is okay and it can be completed the next day.

Variations:

For readers who struggle with sight vocabulary, a ring of frequently used words is sent home for practice with parents. At times, learners may need extra help with **handwriting** or **math** and we may provide homework for extra practice in these areas.

For 3rd and 4th Graders

What is it?

Homework at the 3rd and 4th Grade level involve activities in the language arts, math and social studies realms and which can overlap. Homework is done independently but adults are welcome to engage with their children around concepts and skills.

Why do we do it?

- To review and occasionally extend concepts and skills previously introduced in the classroom
- To preview information that will be relevant to an upcoming lesson (e.g. reading about a topic for theme study)
- To provide parents an opportunity to become familiar with daily classroom work and connect with their children around school activities
- To support the development of self responsibility and time management

How does it happen and for how long?

Whether homework is presented weekly or daily, students are assigned an amount of homework that can be divided equitably among four nights, to be completed within approximately 30 minutes or less each night.

Homework should be completed in pencil. A developmentally appropriate degree of care and neatness should be evident in the work.

Homework should be completed independently, unless an assignment requires adult contributions (e.g. an interview) or if a student needs help reading directions. However, teachers ask parents to alert them if any difficulties arise, such as consistent confusion about directions and content and/or difficulty with stamina and pacing.

Variations:

Should a child or parent request more than the assigned amount of homework each week, there are a

range of activities to choose from to enrich the home-school learning connection, such as touch typing, online math games (e.g. ABACUS or Math Playground's Thinking Blocks), as well as Spelling City.

For 5th and 6th Graders

What is it?

Homework at the 5th and 6th Grade level is assigned on a whole class, small group, and individual basis. It is often re-planned during the school day in response to how related activities have progressed. We also encourage personalized learning by assigning projects based on personal interests and practical life skills, as well as research on topics of the students' choosing.

Why do we do it?

- To provide practice or an opportunity to explore a topic or skill further than the school day allows
- To allow sustained time on task at a pace comfortable for the individual student
- To include activities that can be better or only done at home or outside of school
- To encourage self-awareness about learning - seeing which skills are mastered and which need more development
- To develop students' independence and organizational skills

How does it happen and for how long?

We expect upper grade students to spend no more than an hour per day on homework, Monday through Thursday, although some choose to work longer to satisfy their own goals. Homework is not specifically assigned for weekends, though some students may structure work to include those times.

We work in school on successful homework strategies, such as: recording assignments accurately, structuring work time, seeking help, keeping track of materials, and the close reading of directions.

Homework that is assigned for an extended period of time allows students flexibility and requires more organization and responsibility. Sometimes a more independent project takes a child into unfamiliar territory, but any problems can be brought to the teacher for support or clarification. Some long-term assignments include check-ins, such as a written record of pages read or a journal/blog that reports progress.

We value, and want to encourage, time spent with family and in the cultivation of personal interests beyond the school experience. We hope that the time limits on homework leave room for that kind of exploration as well as for further, self-initiated work related to activities in school.

Links to Articles About Homework:

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/The-Case-For-and-Against-Homework.aspx>

<http://www.hampdenstreet.school.nz/assets/Uploads/School-Community/BOT/Case-For-and-Against-Homework.pdf>

[ework.pdf](#)

http://www.education.com/magazine/article/The_Homework_Debate/

<http://www.scilearn.com/blog/homework-debate-is-homework-helpful-or-harmful.php>

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2012/02/the_homework_debate.html

http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/LessonsinLearning/50-05_04_09-Lil-Homework-REV-E-meta.pdf

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2012/01/are-you-down-with-or-done-with-homework/>

<http://stophomework.com/fact.pdf>

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1376208,00.html>

<http://today.duke.edu/2006/03/homework.html>

historical perspective (however, date for the last entry in chronology must be incorrect)

<http://www.esc16.net/users/0020/FACES/FACES%202012%20handouts/Shaver/Shaver%2003%20The%20Homework%20Debate%20Timeline.pdf>

Books we consulted about homework

Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs, Cathy Vatterot, 2009

The Homework Myth: Why our Kids Get too much of a Bad Thing, Alfie Kohn, 2006

The Case Against Homework: How Homework is Hurting Children and What Parents Can Do About It, Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish, 2006