

CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Classroom Instruction	Expect and monitor sound homework practices and communication with parents	<b>All teachers check, mark, and return homework. (152)</b>

### Evidence Review:

Research has long established the strong influence of a student’s home environment on that student’s success in school. Less clear has been what schools can do to engage parents in their children’s learning. We now have significant, new research that shows that schools can improve their students’ learning by engaging parents in ways that directly relate to their children’s academic progress, maintaining a consistent message of what is expected of parents, and reaching parents directly, personally, and with a trusting approach (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, & Rubenstein, 1999; Redding, 2000). Homework is a primary point of interface between the school and the home, and parents are best able to support the school’s purposes for homework when they understand what is expected of students and their role in monitoring their children’s homework. Consistency from teacher to teacher and across grade levels and subjects contributes to teachers’, parents’, and students’ understanding of the school’s purposes for homework and also reinforces students’ formation of independent study habits.

### Guidelines for Homework

Homework is most effective when it is used in ways proven to contribute most to student learning and student acquisition of independent study habits. Guidelines for effective homework are:

- Homework must be monitored and followed up.
- Teacher comments on homework are vital; graded homework that counts is most effective. Prompt return of homework by teacher is essential.
- Practice and preparation assignments are primarily the responsibility of the students to complete themselves.
- It is unrealistic to expect parents to play significant instructional roles with homework, especially at the upper grades (Grolnick et al., 1997).
- In the elementary grades, brief forms of parental involvement are desirable (especially those assignments that call for students to show or explain their work to parents and get their reactions).
- Assigning homework for punishment is inappropriate.



Source: Sam Redding, *The Mega System. Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community of the School.*

### **Evidence Review:**

We know that homework is a powerful means for increasing children's learning. 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. Homework is also the topic of complaint many parents raise against schools. Parents 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, parents, 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 the habit of study.

Research 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 a significant 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 a clear policy that states the roles of teachers, parents, 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.

Source: ADI, *School Community Council Planning Guide*

### **Evidence Review:**

What is included in an effective homework policy?

### **Elements of a Homework Policy**

- **Importance.** Explain why homework is important.
- **Roles.** Clearly state the roles of teachers, parents, 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).
- **Weight.** Establish the weight of homework in determining report card grades.
- **Correction/Return.** Establish guidelines for prompt return of graded homework to students.
- **Pre-schoolers.** Explain importance of parent-child interaction in learning activities for pre-school-age children

Source: ADI, *School Community Council Planning Guide*

### **Example:**

The following is an example of a homework policy:

## **Franklin School Community**

### **Homework Policy**

Because the Franklin School Community wishes to assist students in developing habits and skills of independent study and desires to extend learning time beyond the regular school day, homework will be



assigned by teachers at all grade levels. As a rule, students will receive homework assignments each school day, and the amount of time required to complete such homework will typically be no less than 10 minutes per grade level per day. Parents will be expected to provide a quiet, well-lighted place for children to study and to see that their children complete homework assignments. Parents may, but will not be expected to, assist their children in understanding homework. Students will complete homework and submit it to their teachers on time. Teachers will correct and return homework promptly, within a period of time not to exceed one week. Homework will count for no less than 20% of the report card grade in each subject. While students in the pre-school program may receive few “homework” assignments, they will be provided interactive learning activities that include their parents, and parents are encouraged to take time each day for learning activities with their pre-school children.

### **Our Homework Policy (Worksheet):**

- Importance:
- Roles:
- Frequency:
- Quantity:
- Weight:
- Correction/Return:
- Parent-Child Interactions for Pre-schoolers:

### **Our Homework Policy (Draft):**

Source: ADI, *School Community Council Planning Guide*

### **Evidence Review:**

Students learn best when homework is assigned regularly, graded, returned promptly, and used primarily to rehearse material first presented by the teacher at school.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Homework, properly utilized by teachers, produces an effect on learning three times as large as family socioeconomic status. Homework is effective in student mastery of facts and concepts as well as critical thinking and formation of productive attitudes and habits. Homework has compensatory effects in that students of lower ability can achieve marks equal to those of higher ability students through increased study at home. Homework is also a significant factor in differences in achievement test scores.

In addition to its positive effect on academic achievement, homework:

- establishes the habit of studying in the home;



- prepares the student for independent learning;
- can be a focal point of constructive family interaction;
- allows the parents to see what the student is learning in school;
- competes with televiewing rather than with constructive activities in most homes;
- extends formal learning beyond the school day;
- enables the student to reflect on material and become more intimately familiar with it than is often allowed in a busy, sometimes distracting school setting; and
- provides the teacher with a frequent check on the student's progress.

Research is helpful in establishing expectations for teachers in the effective use of homework. A study of the effectiveness of homework in mathematics, for example, concluded the following:

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

Other studies attest to the importance of the teacher grading and placing written comments on homework. Daily homework assignments have been found superior to less frequent assignments.

#### APPLICATION

The effects of homework do not increase proportionately with the amount assigned, but rather with the frequency (or regularity) of its assignment, the nature of the assignment, and the teacher's attention to the student's work. 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 a significant part of the report card grade; and
- returned to the student soon after it is collected, and marked with comments particular to the student.

Schools facilitate parents, students, and teachers in their efforts with homework by establishing a school-wide standard for frequency and quantity of homework. For example, some schools expect about ten minutes of homework each school night for first-graders, and elevate the expectations by an additional ten minutes for each year of school. This is a good way to gradually and consistently develop homework habits.

#### REFERENCES

Austin (1976); Elawar & Corno (1985); Keith (1982); Page (1958); Page & Keith (1981); Paschel, Weinstein & Walberg (1984); Walberg (1984).



Source: Sam Redding, *Parents and Learning*.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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