

Criteria and Issues for Discussion Homework and Learning Beyond School Hours

**For Board Discussion
April 14, 2016**

Introduction

- State Board beliefs re importance of
 - Students taking ownership and responsibility for their learning
 - Students mastering critical life skills such as responsibility, self-discipline, time-management and problem-solving and reaching expected academic standards
 - Recognizing that not all students learn these skills through the same activities or at the same speeds.
 - Expecting that students will build skills and depth of understanding through a combination of learning experiences that occur both within and outside of classrooms and schools
 - Out of school learning, whether teacher or student driven, being purposeful and tailored to individual student needs with respect to quantity, rigor and learning objectives
 - Engaging parents/guardians and other community members as contributing resources for a child's learning
 - What we know from research

Shared Responsibilities

1. The Superintendent will ensure that
 - a. An effective, consistent (by grade/age level) and aligned plan is implemented at all school sites to ensure that any assigned learning to be completed outside of school meets the above expectations of the Board
 - b. Appropriate learning spaces are provided during the day and, to the degree possible, after school, to allow students to thrive and to provide students the opportunities to receive support and clarification whether from their peers, volunteers, or an educator (e.g., from after school programs, tutors, flex periods, etc.)
2. The Principal has responsibility to
 - a. Coordinate with staff members and communicate to parents/guardians a plan that adheres to this district policy
 - b. Ensure that teachers are coordinating out of school assignments such that students are adhering to the intent of this policy

3. The Teacher has responsibility to
 - a. Encourage students to pursue their own learning outside of school
 - b. Define and communicate expectations to students and parents/guardians for all assignments to be completed outside of school
 - c. Coordinate with all grade-level colleagues to ensure that expectations for out of school work, across all classes, are reasonable and consistent with the expectations outlined in this policy
4. Parent/guardian has responsibility to
 - a. Cooperatively support this portion of the educational program through encouragement and involvement with the student
5. The Student has responsibility to
 - a. Take ownership of his or her own learning both within and outside of the classroom
6. Parents, teachers and students have the responsibility to
 - a. Collaborate and consult when a student is absent or is just behind in work to ensure that she/he has the opportunity to learn content missed

Guidelines

Regardless of whether a teacher stipulates that a specific assignment or project is to be done outside of school, or whether the student is continuing work begun in class, the following guidelines will apply:

All Students, All Grades

- Learning will vary according to a student's grade level, ability, need and interests, whenever possible.
- Students are expected to read or be read to (independently or assisted) on a daily basis and are encouraged to discuss what they've read with an adult or peer, to the degree possible.
- NOT expected to do teacher-assigned work over the weekends, or school holidays and/or breaks (but **are** encouraged to read and pursue learning of interest to them during these times)
- Students who wish to do more work than what may be assigned by a teacher shall be provided a menu of options (online or otherwise) that will allow them to work on a variety of relevant material at a pace selected by them, in consultation with their parents

Elementary - Pre-K through Grade 3:

- Time reading books, and being read to by older readers or peers, is the main expectation for out of classroom learning.
- Additional work may be encouraged or assigned if it deepens learning of classroom projects, or if it is student-driven, or if both the teacher and the parent/guardian determine that it is necessary for a specific student to master academic content

Upper Elementary - Grades 4-5:

- Students, in collaboration with their teachers (and in some cases their parents), shall create personalized at-home learning goals that complement, expand and deepen lessons and work taking place during the school day
- Students may be encouraged to work independently or collaboratively on activities that will enhance an assigned piece of writing, experiment or project
- Additional out of school work may be encouraged or assigned if both the teacher and the parent/guardian determine that it is necessary for a specific student to master academic content

Middle School - Grades 6-8:

- Students shall create personalized, at-home learning goals that complement, expand and deepen lessons and work taking place during the school day
 - developing and practicing a variety of time-management strategies
 - successfully complete long term projects that are assigned over a period of weeks or months
- Students will also be encouraged to spend out of school learning time on activities that build character, knowledge and skills that may or may not be addressed during school hours
 - practicing an instrument
 - exploring different types of careers
 - serving the community
 - participating in organized sports
- Students who have selected an accelerated/compacted math pathway should expect to do additional homework, as this will likely be required in order to fit four to five years of math coursework into a three-year timespan
- Additional out of school work may be encouraged or assigned if both the teacher and the parent/guardian determine that it is necessary for a specific student to master academic content

Questions, Issues and Challenges for Discussion

District/Board Beliefs:

- What does the Board believe about whether daily at-home assignments are a necessary step towards mastering academic or life skills (as stated in current Board Policy)?
- Should it be an expectation that students do extra homework as a way to make up school/homework, tests, etc. missed due to absence?
- When might it be appropriate to complete missed assignments and tests in their entirety and when is it more reasonable and valuable to the student to minimize the amount of catch-up work required?
- Should teachers be allowed to assign homework over weekends, breaks and holidays?

Weighting Homework:

- How much weight should be given to a student's grade based on completion and quality of work done outside of school?
- If you don't give this work enough weight, then a student has more "riding on" test and quizzes
- Many students do not do their best work outside of school, and still others do not have home environments and supports for doing highest quality work.

Goal Setting & Personalized Learning Plans (PLP):

- Teachers are very concerned about how to manage PLP and goals setting for out of school learning, especially at middle school where teachers may have 150 or so students
- What are positives and negatives of stipulating specific amounts of time expected of students to put into OOSL?
- Who will create the menus and banks of learning opportunities, and who will manage the material needed for fully differentiated homework assignments?
- How will teachers get the time needed to coordinate all this?

Homework as Communication:

- What will be means of ensuring parents know what sort of learning is happening in school?

Preparing for Future Grade Levels:

- Will our new policy ensure students are prepared for the rigor of high school?

