

## HOMEWORK

Homework serves as a link between school and home. One measure of a program or course is the quality of the work done at home by the student. A strong home-school partnership, with many lasting benefits for the individual student and the student's family, can be greatly enhanced by a sound implementation of homework practices. In addition, homework should be an important tool in developing independent thought, self-direction and self-discipline. It assists the student in developing good work habits and in the wise use of time.

There are four types of commonly assigned homework, each having a different intended outcome as shown below:

| Type        | Definition   | Intended Outcome  | Application  |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| Completion  | Any work assigned during the school day not completed in class.  | Help students keep up to date with the classroom curriculum.  | The classroom curriculum should be differentiated if a student has completed homework on a regular basis.  |
| Practice    | Any work that increases or improves fluency of a skill or a process that is not yet fluent.                  | Helps students practice newly acquired skills to develop fluency.   | To be effective, practice homework requires students to already be able independently perform the skills required.   |
| Preparation | Any work that prepares students for upcoming lessons or classes.   | Encourages students to acquire background information or to bring their prior experiences to upcoming units of study. | To be effective, preparation homework requires students to come to class with prior knowledge that will be applied to the lesson.  |
| Extension   | Any work that explores and refines learning in new contexts or integrates and expands on classroom learning. | Encourages students to problem solve and/or think critically and creatively.  | To be effective extension homework does not require a student to learn curriculum content independently. Instead, students deepen understanding and relate learning to the real world. |

As with any work assigned to and chosen by students, rigor is not a product of *quantity*; it is a product of *quality* in terms of the level of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and

communication skills the teacher and student bring to the learning task. A brief and rigorous assignment will be preferred to one that is lengthy and /or rote. The meaningfulness of homework assignments with engaging qualities such as choice, level of challenge, authenticity, and novelty, that maximize student success should drive teacher decisions about what to assign. At any age..."too much homework may diminish its effectiveness or even become counterproductive." (Cooper, Robinson and Patall, 2006)

**General Guidelines for homework include:**

- Practice homework should be assigned after introduction and thorough explanation of the skills necessary to successfully complete the assignment.
- Homework should be assigned in such a manner that it will be clearly understood by all students.
- Homework should serve a valid purpose and be closely related to classroom activities.
- A student's access to resource materials should be considered when making assignments.
- Homework should be evaluated promptly and returned to the student with feedback.
- Teachers should seek to determine the cause if a student regularly fails to complete assigned work. Teachers should not avoid giving homework because they believe students will not do the work.
- Homework should not be used for disciplinary purposes.
- Teachers and administrators should take appropriate steps to communicate with parents regarding the division's homework policy and to solicit their support.

Adopted:

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78.

|             |      |                                      |
|-------------|------|--------------------------------------|
| Cross Ref.: | IB   | Academic Freedom                     |
|             | IGBC | Parental Involvement                 |
|             | IKA  | Parental Assistance with Instruction |
|             | IFF  | Student Course Load                  |

ACPS Ref.: *The Framework for Quality Learning*

## Specific Guidelines

Specific time limit guidelines for homework are provided here. The amount of homework assigned to students should be different across school and grade levels, and the amount of time a student spends on assigned homework depends on such factors as the student's needs, school schedule, and proximity to tests and other summative assessments. Time spent on homework should be balanced with the importance of personal and family wellness and the wide array of obligations students may experience.

Both the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the National Education Association (NEA) endorse the 10-minute rule, which states that the maximum amount of homework (all subjects combined) should not exceed 10 minutes per grade level per night. Children differ, however, in the amount of time it takes them to complete homework. The teacher may think he or she has given a 20-minute assignment, but one child may finish it in 20 minutes while it takes another child an hour. If homework seems excessive, the child's parent should advise the teacher of the amount of time the child spends on each assignment.

Parents and families should be involved with homework in appropriate ways that do not require them to teach skills or content or to police homework completion. Schools should not penalize students for lack of parent involvement. Some examples of appropriate family involvement include participating as...

- a sounding board for students to summarize what they learned from homework.
- a learner with the student teaching a family member(s) about something he/she learned at school through a game, presentation, recitation, etc.
- an audience for a student product or performance.
- a provider of an environment conducive to the student success, e.g. workspace, basic materials, uninterrupted time.
- a resource of information based on experience or opinion that causes family members to engage in meaningful conversations relevant to the academic curriculum.

Assigning homework should be avoided during school breaks. No new homework over and above what is normally assigned should not be assigned during Thanksgiving break, winter break, or spring break. Students' religious observances, whether specified on the ACPS calendar or not, should be respected.

A parent of an Albemarle County Public Schools student who has a concern about the quality and /or quantity of homework that a teacher is assigning will first discuss the concern with the teacher. After doing so, if the matter remains unresolved, the parent will discuss the concern with the school principal.

## Elementary and Middle School Homework Time Guidelines

**Grades K-2-** Homework at the lower elementary level should be minimal and experiential, and most often should take the form of reading, playing games, or doing other activities that involve family.

**Grades 3-5-** Homework during these grade levels will reflect the more complex nature of the content that students are expected to know and understand as well as the increasing expectation that students be more independent. Research has not shown a strong relationship between the amount of homework an elementary school student completes and achievement on standardized assessments.

**Grades 6-8-** Homework in middle school can have an impact on student achievement as measured by scores on standardized assessments. Assignments should be carefully planned among core teachers so that students are not given excessive amounts of homework. This recommendation is based on research that shows that homework can have a positive relationship with student learning for middle school students.

| Grade Level  | Average Homework Time Per Night for All Subjects Combined (This includes independent reading time.) |
|--------------|---|
| Kindergarten | Up to 10 minutes  |
| 1st Grade    | Up to 10 minutes  |
| 2nd Grade    | Up to 20 minutes  |
| 3rd Grade    | Up to 30 minutes  |
| 4th Grade    | Up to 40 minutes  |
| 5th Grade    | Up to 50 minutes  |
| 6th Grade    | Up to 60 minutes*   |
| 7th Grade    | Up to 70 minutes*   |
| 8th Grade    | Up to 80 minutes*   |

\*Some students at the middle level might be taking courses for high school credit; therefore, the homework time guidelines for high school (next page) will apply for the corresponding course(s).

## High School Homework Time Guidelines

**Grades 9-12-** As in middle school, homework can have a positive impact on student achievement in high school. Therefore, homework should not be avoided by teachers because they think their students will not complete it. High school teachers who teach the same subject and level should coordinate their homework assignments. Additionally, teachers are to avoid giving excessive amounts of homework.

| Subject                       | Average Homework Time Per Week Per Subject |
|-------------------------------|--|
| English                       | 2 Hours Per Week                           |
| Math                          | 2 Hours Per Week                           |
| Science                       | 2 Hours Per Week                           |
| Social Studies                | 2 Hours Per Week                           |
| Health and Physical Education | 1 Hour Per Week                            |
| World Languages               | 2 Hours Per Week                           |
| Electives                     | 1.5 Hours Per Week                         |

## Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Homework Guidelines

High school students taking college level courses (AP or Dual Enrollment) should expect that these classes will require considerable time commitment, active engagement in the classroom, as well as critical and independent thinking. In keeping with the general philosophy and guidelines established previously in this homework policy, teachers of these courses will assign homework that is meaningful, relevant, and specifically designed to build the skills and complex understandings demanded by college level coursework. Parents and students should expect that some of the assignments in these courses will exceed the time limitations designated for high school credit classes. Parents and students should expect these courses to average 3 hours of homework per week.

## References:

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