



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Homework

Homework can be broadly considered as any task assigned by educators that is meant to be completed outside of regular school hours. Homework is intended to give students opportunities to review work and practice skills taught in class, study for tests, and prepare for upcoming lessons (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).



Why is it important?

- Well-designed and properly implemented homework assignments effectively reinforce classroom learning (Carr, 2013).
- Homework helps students retain information, improve their study skills, and demonstrate learning outside of school (Corno, 2000).
- Students are more likely to complete and benefit from homework when it is designed to meet specific purposes and goals (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).
- The amount of effort students put forth towards homework is an important factor related to student achievement (Trautwein, 2007).

In Practice

Schools can provide general recommendations to help educators make homework-related decisions that benefit students.



What can schools do?

Our expectations for homework should differ based on the grade level of students.

- In elementary school, homework should be used to foster positive attitudes, develop study skills, and reinforce the practice of learning outside of school.
- In middle and high-school, homework should help students gain the subject-specific knowledge needed to facilitate positive academic outcomes.

In terms of homework frequency and duration, schools should consider the following guidelines:

- For elementary school students, the benefits of homework are not a product of time spent but rather the habits developed through regular, formal practice at home.
- For junior high students, less than 1 hour per night is considered sufficient to receive the academic benefits of homework; and, for high school students, the optimum amount of time spent on homework rests between 1 hour to hours per evening.

While, the design and purpose may vary, homework should be required of students at all grade levels (Cooper, 1989).



In the Classroom

Educators can create effective homework assignments for all learners by:

- Focusing on quality over quantity through frequent, carefully chosen homework assignments centered around effective study habits and, for middle and high-school students, self-directed learning (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2015).
- Ensuring that homework assignments are neither too easy that they may be considered dull or repetitive, nor too challenging to discourage students (Fernández-Alonso et al., 2015).
- Designing homework that has a clear educational purpose, efficiently demonstrates student learning, provides a certain degree of flexibility for personalization, and instills feelings of competence (Vatterott, 2010).
- Avoiding excessive homework as it can have detrimental impacts to student health, including sleep issues and aggravated stress levels (Galloway et al., 2013).
- Conveying to parents that meaningful discussions at home concerning academics help support the attitudes and behaviours most associated with student achievement.

References

- Carr, N. S. (2013). Increasing the effectiveness of homework for all learners in the inclusive classroom. *School Community Journal, 23*(1), 169-182.
- Cooper, H. (1989). Synthesis of research on homework. *Educational Leadership 47*(3), 85-91.
- Corno, L. (2000). Looking at homework differently. *The Elementary School Journal, 100*, 529-548.
- Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' roles in designing homework. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(3), 181-193.
- Fernández-Alonso R., Suárez-Álvarez J., & Muñiz J. (2015). Adolescents' homework performance in mathematics and science: Personal factors and teaching practices. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 1-11*.
- Galloway M., Conner J., & Pope D. (2013). Nonacademic effects of homework in privileged, high-performing high schools. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 81*(4), 490-510.
- Trautwein, U. (2007). The homework-achievement relation reconsidered: Differentiating homework time, homework frequency, and homework effort. *Learning and Instruction, 17*(3), 372-388.
- Vatterott, C. (2010). Five hallmarks of good homework. *Educational Leadership, 68*(1), 10-15.