

IDEAS FOR DEVELOPING A HOMEWORK SUPPORT PROGRAM IN YOUR SCHOOL

Here's why you might need a support program!

Unsolicited parent emails from www.homeworklady.com

1. I saw you on the Channel 2 show today. I have a 4th grader with ADD and she comes home with homework that has not been finished in class plus any additional homework for that day. She is not understanding what is being taught in class, as we are redoing most of that work on a daily basis. We can spend up to 4-5 hours per night on just a few assignments, as she can not understand what she is reading in an open book assignment and can not understand adding and subtraction as well. It is a nightly battle between us and we feel that we are reteaching what has been taught in school that day or even for the week. I did hear you say that we should send back any work when it is done, either right or wrong. Will the teacher then understand that she is not learning what is being taught? They have told us to have her put up folders so she cannot see around her, but with ADD that is not working. We had her tested at Sylvan and she is only at a second grade level in reading and math, but the school will not give her any extra help or tutors at this point. We are always looking for help in how to improve her skills. Will sending back homework wrong help?

(From a mom in rural Illinois)

2. We think that our schools assign excessive homework (our son has usually had 4 to 6 hours a night in 8th and 9th grade, slightly less in earlier grades). We have tried talking with teachers, counselors, and administrators and they all say that what they are assigning is necessary and pretty much perfect and if there is a problem it must be with our son. He is an excellent student in 9th grade who takes advanced class and makes mostly A's with an occasional B, so clearly he isn't having much of a problem. Other parents tell us their children spend similar time on their homework and they get similar responses from faculty.

This is a "wealthy" school district with high academic achievement. Faculty takes much of the credit for the academic success of students, but clearly demographics has a lot to do with it. ...We have offered suggestions such as students logging the time spent on homework or teachers providing suggested times that assignments should take. All of our suggestions have been ignored. They don't want to hear anything but compliments. If there is a problem then it can only be due to students or parents. I think they are really good people who sincerely believe that all this homework is best for the kids and that parents who are concerned about it are just ignorant. I think they are doing what they sincerely believe is best for students and that parents have no right to question it since they are professionals....

We are not the kind of people to lead a revolution, raise a stink at school board meetings, etc. We think our son is getting a good education, but we are increasingly worried about the consequences of him having no life but homework. Do you have any suggestions?

(From a dad in a big city suburb in Texas)

Which approach to change is right for your building?

It depends on—

how serious a problem it is and your administrative management style

- **Slow and steady**

Surveys, committees, study groups, long range planning

- **Shoot first, ask questions later**

Just do something! shake 'em up, make them mad, start the debate.
See what happens, then regroup.

- **Triage—put your foot down, stop the bleeding**

Pick your battles—see baby steps below

Baby steps to homework reform

- Limit the percentage of grade that homework may count
- Limit number of subjects each night
 - specify certain nights for certain subjects or class periods)
- Limit the weight of the backpack
 - no more than one or two books go home each night
 - extra copy of book at home for frequently used books
- Revise late policies
- Set weekly or nightly time limits
- Prioritize subjects
- Require group calendar with limits on number of tests, projects
- Limit the number of AP classes students may take
- Prohibit weekend or holiday homework
- Classroom or team policies
- Department or building guidelines

CREATING YOUR CLASSROOM OR TEAM POLICY

Mandatory or optional	
% of the quarter grade	
ways to improve success rate differentiation for special needs students	
policy for late work	
policy for make-up of homework after absences	
plan for students who consistently fail to complete homework (ie: mandatory after-school homework clubs, catch-up days where others have free choice of learning activities)	
Coordination of team's assignments	
Maximum number of big projects per week/tests per week	
Calendar to track assignments and maintain limits—sign up in advance, when it's full it's full.	

DEPARTMENT OR BUILDING GUIDELINES

How much standardization, how much teacher freedom?

Limit on the amount of homework assigned in terms of time	
Limit on the % homework may count in the quarter grade	
Guidelines for late work	
Guidelines for weekend or holiday homework	
Limit the number of AP courses students can take in a semester	
School wide calendar to track assignments and maintain limits—for major projects, exams--when it's full it's full.	
Designate light and heavy courses	
Coordination of homework across academic departments (especially freshman year)	

Comprehensive homework reform

Homework support program #1 Dodgeland School District, Juneau, Wisconsin Project ASPIRE

Middle school turn around program(TAP)

Supportive study hall

Full time teacher

Teacher communicates daily with parents about homework

38 students

- High school turn around program(TAP)

42 minute supportive study hall/student resource center

full time teacher

72 students

- PALS

4th and 5th graders

Twice a week after school

Staffed by volunteers

23 students

- Study club

6th , 7th , and 8th graders

snacks, recreation and tutoring

voluntary

20 students

- Extended day

4th-8th graders and 9th-12th graders

mandatory for students missing 3 or more assignments

Monday through Thursday 3-5 pm.

Transportation provided

128 referrals last year(referrals require one-week in program)

- Remedial course for 10th-12th graders

For students who failed one or more classes or

Are 2 or more years below age group in basic skills

- GED option 2

School within a school

12th graders 17 years old and older

meets evenings and Saturdays

\$90,000 grant from the State of Wisconsin Alternative Education Programs funds all programs

For more information contact Annette Thompson at Thompson@dodgeland.k12.wi.us

Homework support program #2
REACH: Required Educational Assistance Center for Homework
Bangor, Wisconsin(also state grant funded)

Required:

*Students will be required to attend the homework center once they have received three late or missing assignments in any one class.

*They will be required to attend and complete homework in the homework center for a minimum of two days—Monday and Tuesday—of the following week they were referred.

*After the minimum two day attendance, students will be dismissed from the homework center when they have demonstrated passing grades on the homework from the referred class.

*Students must be referred by Thursday of the week prior to attending the homework center. The classroom teacher must notify the parents.

Voluntary:

*The REACH Homework Center will be open to all 6-12 students who have a parent permission slip on file.

*The REACH Homework Center will be staffed from 3:15-4:45 Monday through Thursday.

Student and Parent Notification:

*Letters will be sent to all 6-12 families prior to the school starting informing them of the required and voluntary homework center availability and procedures.

--letters explaining the required homework center will be included in the district newsletter.

--letters explaining the voluntary aspect will be picked up at registration.

*All students will be read an announcement on the first day of school during their advisor/advisee period regarding the center's requirements.

*For any student involved in a co-curricular activity, a referral will result in one unexcused absence from the activity or activities they are participating in.

*If the event has started before the homework center is dismissed or the event bus has left, the students will not participate in that evening's contest.

(ZAP form, Hazelwood Middle School)

YOU'VE BEEN ZAPped (Zeros aren't permitted)	
Name _____	Date _____
Grade _____	I.D. _____
Teacher _____	
Assignment _____	

Parent phone number _____	
This assignment is due to your teacher by 8:00am on the next school day. After 8:00 am you may turn the assignment into the office. If you do not hand in the assignment, you must attend ZAP-time after school until 4:00pm	
Last period room: A-day _____ B-day _____	
_____ No show	_____ Absent

ZAP PROCEDURES Hazelwood West Middle School, Hazelwood, Missouri

Student is ZAPped				
Parent contact is made				
Student hands in work by 8:05am on the next day				
*	Student does NOT hand in work before 8:05am on the next day			
	ZAP slips picked up by 8:30am or sent to the office by 9:00am			
	Secretary prepare a list of students who were ZAPped			
	ZAP list is distributed to the Advisory classes			
	Advisory teacher notifies student			
	Student hands in homework to the office	Student does NOT hand in work to the office		

	Secretary attaches ZAP slip to work	ZAP slips are returned to the teacher who issued them		
	Work is given to teacher *	Student reports to the teacher's classroom to check on assignment and get materials		
		Student reports to ZAP/completes work	Student does NOT report to ZAP	
		Work is given to teacher *	Teacher calls parents of students who did not report to ZAP	
			ZAP slips put in NO SHOW envelope in Room 142 or turned into office	
			Principal assigns LUNCH ZAP to student who did not attend ZAP and notifies parents	
			Student attends LUNCH ZAP and completes work	Student does NOT attend LUNCH ZAP
			Work is given to teacher *	Principal assigns discipline/ notifies parent *

Sample action plan for long range comprehensive homework reform

Lynnbrook High School, Cupertino, California

WHAT (needs to be done?)	WHO (will do it?)	HOW (will they accomplish it?)	WHEN (should the job be finished?)
Raise awareness of parents	Principal	Article in principal's newsletter	April 2002
Raise awareness of teachers	Teacher research group	Read and discuss homework literature	Summer 2002
Raise awareness of teachers	Teacher research group	Presentation to faculty at faculty meeting	September 2002
Gather feedback	Principal	Conduct student, parent, and teacher focus groups	October 2002
Create homework guidelines	Guidelines Committee of parents, teachers, and students	Use input from principal, teacher research group, and focus groups to create guidelines	February 2003
Present homework guidelines to faculty	Principal and Guidelines Committee	Present and receive feedback from all faculty during faculty in-service day.	March 2003
Introduce guidelines to parents	Principal and outside consultant	Principal's newsletter. Evening parent meeting with consultant	April 2003

Identifying priorities and developing an action plan

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