

# How can principals and superintendents improve the practice of homework?

## A. Discuss with teachers: The role of homework in the learning process:

- *Practice*
- *Processing*
- *Pre-learning*
- *Check for understanding or progress toward goals*

(Homework is not busy work or for punishment)

## B. Discuss with teachers: What quality of homework tasks look like:

- \*have a clear academic purpose (not busy work)*
- \*are customized to promote ownership (personal)*
- \*instill a sense of competence (doable)*
- \*are "aesthetically pleasing"*  
*(well-organized, easy to understand, pleasant)*

HOMEWORK THAT CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT HELP IS NOT GOOD HOMEWORK!

## C. Raise sensitivity about differences in home environments

Teachers should *not* assume:

- *The child has a quiet place to do homework.*
- *The child has a parent home in the evening.*
- *The child's parents speak and read English.*
- *The family has money for school supplies.*
- *The child has access to materials such as paper, a pencil sharpener, scissors, glue, magazines, or a calculator.*
- *The child has access to a computer or the Internet.*

## **Six steps to effective homework**

Differentiating tasks through diagnosis

Designing quality tasks

Decriminalizing grading

Focusing on feedback

Using completion strategies

Establishing support programs

**Depending on whether administrators mandate change or establish a committee, it's important to:**

- limit the percentage homework can count in the grade(10% or less)
- eliminate failure due to incomplete homework
- establish homework support programs after school, during the school day, or on Saturday.

### **HOMEWORK SUPPORT PROGRAM OPTIONS**

#### **Options for finding time in the school day**

- Voluntary or mandatory after-school homework assistance program
- Lunch and Work—homework catch-up program
- One-hour lunch period to accommodate homework assistance
- Advisory time used as teacher or peer assistance
- In-school suspension also houses homework support program
- Monthly late start days
- Shorten classes once a week to provide catch-up time
- Extending school day—extra period at end of day for all for supervised homework

**Curricular and scheduling options**

- Academic lab period/study hall/independent learning for credit
- Academic lab periods that allow students to travel for teacher help
- Independent Study/Alternative Strategies—elective courses
- Mandatory “Math help” or “Credit recovery” course is place of an elective
- Middle school--Pull out of one exploratory wheel, short term or for quarter/semester to catch up and learn homework management skills
- Elementary school—once a week “Bonus PE” period for students not missing homework/time with teacher for students needing homework time
- Limit the number of AP classes students may take

## Identifying priorities and developing action plans

6 steps to effective homework	What are you already doing well in this area?	How can you improve in this area?	Is this area a high, medium, or low priority?
Differentiating Through diagnosis			
Designing quality tasks			
Decriminalizing Grading			
Focusing on feedback			
Using completion strategies			
Establishing homework support programs			

## 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)	