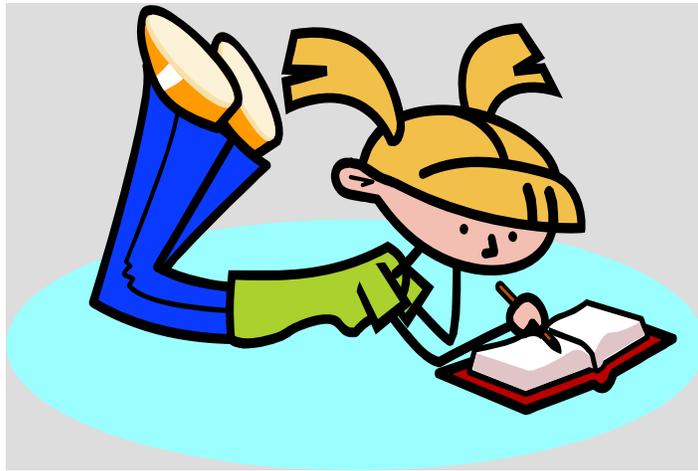


*Goshen Central School District
Goshen, New York*



Homework Guidelines

**Goshen Central School District
2007-08 Board of Education**

**Judy Green, president
Martha Bogart, vice president**

Steve Esposito James Kimiecik Robert Kish Michael Stroka Alvin Watson

District Administration

**Roy Reese, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Miller, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Jane Unhjem, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction**

This guide was developed by faculty members of the Goshen Central School District who participated in a research-based seminar about homework:

Scotchtown Avenue School

**Patricia Kutler
Rita Laskin
Cheryl Winship**

Goshen Intermediate School

**Marcia Atkin
Jan Besaw
Joan Kissinger
Cathy Kloorfain
Gina Maraffino
Patricia O'Neill**

C. J. Hooker Middle School

**Nancy Mesic
Beth Miller**

Goshen High School

**Tricia Brown
Jean Kithcart**

Central Administration

Jane Unhjem

September 2007

*Goshen Central School District
Goshen, New York*

Homework Guidelines

Guidelines: Scotchtown Avenue School (grades K-1-2)	1
Guidelines: Goshen Intermediate School (grades 3-4-5)	1
Guidelines: C. J. Hooker Middle School (grades 6-7-8)	2
Guidelines: Goshen High School (grades 9 to 12)	2
Article, “Focus on Effectiveness: Homework and Practice”	3
Article, “Homework that Helps”	6

**Goshen Central School District
Homework Guidelines**

Scotchtown Avenue School (Grades K-1-2)

Homework at this level provides an opportunity for young students to practice skills being learned during the school day. Homework also serves as communication between home and school, as parents of the youngest students can see what is being learned during the school day by the homework that is assigned.

Usually, homework will be assigned Monday through Thursday, with an average of 10 to 20 minutes each evening – less for kindergarten students, more for 2nd graders.

To assist students in the early grades with homework, parents should do the following:

- Provide a quiet space, away from the TV/computer/video games, where the student can do homework each evening.
- Decide with the student if it is best to do homework as soon as they get home, later in the afternoon or evening, or in two segments to break it up.
- Consult with your child's teacher about whether or not mistakes in the homework should be corrected at home or in school.

Occasionally, there will be times when young children do not complete their homework. But when a student repeatedly does not complete homework assignments, the teacher will contact the family to help get the student back on track. If a student is taking a very long time to complete homework, it may be a sign that the assignment is too difficult, and parents should contact the teacher.

Goshen Intermediate School (Grades 3-4-5)

In the intermediate grades, the amount of homework can be expected to increase, providing an opportunity for students to practice skills, prepare for new learning the following day, and study content that will be tested. Homework also serves as communication between home and school, as parents can see what their student is learning during the school day by the homework that is assigned.

Usually, homework will be assigned Monday through Thursday, with occasional homework on Friday at the discretion of the teacher. Students in these grades will typically spend about 30 to 45 minutes doing homework – less for 3rd graders, more for 5th graders. Occasionally, homework assignments may include reports or projects that are appropriate for this level.

To assist students in the intermediate grades with homework, parents can do the following:

- Provide a quiet space, away from the TV/computer/video games, where the student can do homework each evening.

Goshen Central School District
Homework Guidelines

- Decide with the student if it is best to do homework as soon as they get home, later in the afternoon or evening, or in two segments to break it up.
- Parents should facilitate the completion of homework, not teach the content. If a student needs a great deal of help with content, it may be a sign that the assignment is too difficult, and parents should contact the teacher.

Occasionally, there will be times when children do not complete their homework. But when a student repeatedly does not complete homework assignments, the teacher will contact the family to help get the student back on track.

C. J. Hooker Middle School (grades 6-7-8) and Goshen High School (grades 9 to 12)

In the middle school and high school, the amount of homework can be expected to increase, providing an opportunity for students to review daily lessons, prepare for new learning the following day, and study content that will be tested.

Generally, homework will be assigned Monday through Friday at the discretion of the teacher, as well as long-term assignments (reports, projects, and so on) during the course of the semester.

At this level, teachers will clearly articulate their policy for grading homework to students and their parents because a grade for homework will usually be included in the overall grade for the course. When homework is collected by the teacher, he/she will provide feedback as appropriate and return the homework to students in a timely fashion.

To assist middle school and high school students with homework, parents can do the following:

- Provide a quiet space, away from the TV/computer/video games/cell phone, where the student can do homework each evening.
- Decide with the student if it is best to do homework as soon as they get home, later in the afternoon or evening, or in two segments to break it up.
- Parents should facilitate the completion of homework, not teach the content. If a student needs a great deal of help with the content, it may be a sign that the assignment is too difficult. In this case, parents should encourage their student to discuss the problem with their teacher.

Occasionally, there will be times when middle school and high school students do not complete their homework. But when a student repeatedly does not complete homework assignments, the teacher will contact the family to help get the student back on track.

Focus on Effectiveness: Homework and Practice

Developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon

Homework and practice are related, connected by the context when students are learning on their own and applying new knowledge. Effective teachers approach this kind of learning experience as any other—matching the planned activity to the learning goal. Research on homework indicates that it should be approached not as an afterthought to the school day, but as a focused strategy for increasing understanding. Knowing which of the type of homework is needed helps teachers design appropriate homework assignments.

Practice means students are engaged in applying new learning, often repeatedly. The goal of practice is for students to get as close to mastery as possible. Research on homework and practice answers important questions: When should students time their practice? How many skills should students practice at once? How can teachers ensure a strong connection between memorization and understanding? How much practice is necessary for mastery? Effective student practice is key to student achievement.

Key Research Findings

- Grade level is important when teachers assign homework. Impact of homework on achievement increases as students move through the grades (Cooper, 1989, a, b). At the high school level, for every 30 additional minutes of homework completed daily, a student's GP A can increase up to half a point (Keith, 1982). Elementary students should be assigned homework to establish good learning and study habits (Cooper, 1989; Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, & Greathouse, 1998; Gorges & Elliot, 1999).
- Teachers should assign appropriate homework at instructional levels that match students' skills and provide positive consequences for homework completion (Rademacher, Deshler, Schumacher, & Lenz, 1998; Rosenberg, 1989).
- A survey of teachers of students with learning disabilities found that 80 percent of teachers regularly assigned homework, but few matched the tasks to students' skills and provided feedback or positive consequences for homework performance (Salend & Schliff, 1989).
- Students should receive feedback on their homework. Student achievement can vary based on the kind of feedback provided by the teacher (Walberg, 1999). Grading homework is helpful, but homework in which a teacher has embedded instructive comments has the greatest effect on learning.
- Homework assignments provide the time and experience students need to develop study habits that support learning. They experience the results of their effort as well as the ability to cope with mistakes and difficulty (Bempechat, 2004).
- Mastery requires focused practice over days or weeks. After only four practice sessions students reach a halfway point to mastery. It takes more than 24 more practice sessions before students reach 80 percent mastery. And this practice must occur over a span of days or weeks, and cannot be rushed (Anderson, 1995; Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981).

- Teachers in the United States tend to compress many skills into practice sessions and instructional units. Students learn more when allowed to practice fewer skills or concepts, but at a deeper level (Healy, 1990).
- Complex processes should be broken down into smaller bits, or skills, which should be taught with time allotted for student practice and adaptation (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).
- Parent involvement in homework can hinder student learning (Balli, 1998; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1997, 1998; Perkins & Milgram, 1996). Appropriate parental involvement facilitates homework completion.

Implementation

Appropriate homework and well-designed student practice will increase student learning. A few key changes in practice may make a significant difference in student achievement by increasing the positive effects. Research suggests ideas for planning homework and activities to support practice:

1. Understand the four types of homework. Know when and why to have students practice:
 - a. Memorization of basic rules, algorithms, or laws so the skill becomes rote.
 - b. Increase in skill speed, used for improving students' abilities to apply these skills in more complex problem solving.
 - c. Deepening understanding of a concept-providing students time to read further, elaborating on a new idea and expanding their understanding.
 - d. Preparation for the following day's learning, such as an advance organizer or cue to increase readiness for new information.
2. Match the right type to the goal. Assign the appropriate homework type to meet the learning goal to make homework a more focused learning experience.
3. Assign the right level of homework. Homework assignments should be at the instructional level that matches students' skills.
4. Assign the right amount of homework time. A good rule of thumb is to multiply the grade x 10 to approximate the right amount of minutes per night for students.
5. Apply consistent consequences. Provide positive recognition for homework completion, and appropriate consequences for lack of completion.
6. Recognize student uniqueness. Students need time to adapt and shape what they are learning as they practice. As they practice, given time, they will incorporate the new skill into a knowledge base of their own, deepening understanding.
7. Provide clear homework policies. Create and communicate a homework policy at the school level. Policies developed in individual classrooms may communicate a mixed message to parents, and create confusion and frustration. Include expectations, consequences, guidelines, and helpful tips in school homework policies.
8. Ask parents to facilitate homework completion, not teach content. Communicate ways that families can support homework. Parents should provide a consistent time and place in the home for children to complete homework. Help parents understand that they are not expected to be content experts. If a student needs help with content, that's a sign that the homework assignment may be too difficult.

9. Homework should serve a clear purpose. Make the goal of a homework assignment explicit and clear to everyone, including students.
10. Provide appropriate feedback. Effective feedback corrects misunderstanding, validates process, and highlights errors in thinking.
11. Provide timely feedback. Student learning improves with timely feedback. It's best to provide constructive feedback within hours or a day after students complete an assignment.
12. Create support structures for homework. Journals, trackers, and other tools help students organize assignments and support communication between student, teacher, and parents.

Additional Resources

The National PTA provides information for parents about homework as part of its campaign, "100 Ways to Know More. Do more."

<http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/adccouncil/homework.asp>

Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on- Task to Homework is a publication of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory that includes a synthesis of research and vignettes from schools in the Northwest region.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/oct00/index.html>

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork is a research-based program to effectively involve parents in their children's education.

<http://spearfish.k12.sd.us/west/Specials/Penny/Teacher%20Involve/overview.htm>

© 2005- Focus on Effectiveness is a product of the [Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory](#). These materials are in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission.

Homework That Helps

Schoolwide homework guidelines and department assignment philosophies developed by teachers, parents, and students ensure that homework is productive and reasonable.

By **RAYMOND J. PASI**

Keith, a high school senior, has spent several hours doing homework on virtually every school night since his freshman year. Cindy, his younger sister and a junior, has a similarly challenging academic schedule and some of the same teachers. She rarely spends more than an hour on homework.

Test scores and their academic histories would seem to indicate that they have comparable cognitive abilities. They earn comparable grades. However, Keith has always spent more time on his schoolwork.

Evaluating Homework

Keith and Cindy demonstrate one reason why the subject of homework is so difficult and so complex. The faculty, parents, and some students at Yorktown High School in Arlington, VA, have been grappling with the topic for six years. That's how long ago a focus group of administrators, teachers, students, and parents first met to discuss opinions and perceptions about homework as well as ways that assignments could be made more effective. A year later, the school published general homework guidelines as well as the assignment philosophy and practices of each academic department.

These efforts helped somewhat. The number of complaints about the nature of homework assignments decreased, and faculty members seemed to develop a collective awareness of and sensitivity to what the school community hoped to achieve with homework. We reduced the number and size of summer and vacation assignments, even in more rigorous and AP courses.

This past school year, we thought it might be time to revisit the topic. One of Yorktown's assistant principals chaired a new focus group on homework. As the principal, I have followed with interest the opinions expressed by this group and have noted several similarities to the ideas expressed by the other focus group six years ago.

Changes in Attitudes

This might seem obvious, but there are several things that even the best educators sometimes do reflexively, and assigning homework falls within that realm. Many of us can recall a time, not too long ago, when homework was considered a natural extension of any course. The common belief was that good teachers gave homework, challenging teachers gave a lot of it, and the best students did hours of it. This belief has changed.

- Reflective teachers (and parents) now more routinely ask, "What is the purpose of this assignment?" The value of assignments is questionable when the work does not appear to be enhancing what is being learned in class, does not appear to be a reasonable and practical check for understanding, or does not have some other closely related purpose.

- Assignments can sometimes do more harm than good when they confuse or frustrate students or do not appear to assess or reinforce learning. After tackling assignments they simply cannot complete at home, even with a good faith effort, students often return to class more discouraged about their ability to do the work.

- Involved parents do not like to see their children struggling over assignments that seem unreasonably long or unclear. Students also should know the purpose in the assignment, even if it must be explained to them, or they will have more interest in simply getting it done than in deriving any benefit from it.

- Differentiation should affect assignments as well as instruction. For example, differentiation may involve letting a student complete an essay assignment with a visual presentation instead of a written one. Students appreciate opportunities to use their creativity to complete their work, and teachers can still structure the assignments in a way that meets the homework objectives.

Of course, good teachers, feeling interest in and responsibility for what students learn, still rely on homework for several reasons. Given the time limits, students cannot be exposed to every topic during class. No amount of classroom work will take away the need for students to read material outside of the classroom for an English or social studies course, for example.

Raymond J. Pasi is the principal of Yorktown High School in Arlington, VA, and teaches in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at George Washington University.

The challenge is determining how much material is reasonable and what is truly needed in a particular discipline to bridge one lesson with the next.

Clear Homework Policies Given the many demands on students' time, homework must follow clear, understandable policies that make sense. Policies that simply seem punitive will be suspect; policies that enhance the goals of teaching and learning will elicit more support. Some important questions each teacher must consider are:

- What percentage of a student's grade should be affected by homework? Why do I think that particular percentage is justifiable and fair?
- Do my policies regarding late assignments seek to punish (e.g., a zero for anything late) or to encourage learning (e.g., a penalty for lateness but at least a partial reward for completion)?
- How will I grade this assignment? Have I explained the rubric I will use? How long after my students submit the

work can they expect to get a grade and some type of feedback?

•Do my assignments ever relate to real life? Will my students feel a sense of competence when they complete the work?

•Do my students ever have any fun with this or other assignments, or do they view the homework I give them as pure drudgery to be completed (or copied) as painlessly and quickly as possible? Have I allowed for creativity or self-expression?

•What strategies or resources have I made available for students who attempt to do the assigned work at home but are unable to complete it?

Not Necessarily Fun

Students are no different from adults in this regard: they do not want to be graded negatively for work someone else did not complete.

Group assignments that require collaboration outside the classroom have their place, but teachers have an obligation to help students work out the practical issues of working on a

project together. At times, difficulties with scheduling or transportation really do make an assignment impossible to complete. What happens then? Some students will have easier access to resources that can help them fulfill an assignment more creatively; are those differences taken into account when structuring the assignment?

Finally, as anyone who has ever taken part in a group project knows, working together can be far more challenging than the assignment itself. What happens when one or more group members do not do their part of the project? If the policy is to penalize the entire group, does that simply force the more conscientious students to do all of the work for the entire group?

Summer, Holiday, and Weekend Assignments

We are all aware that many students have hectic schedules with cocurricular, family, and job responsibilities. Students appreciate time for rest, relaxation, and a change of pace just as adults do. If an assignment must be completed during holiday or vacation time, there must be very clear justification for giving it. In addition, it must be reasonable in length. Do not give assignments that do not meet those two fundamental criteria.

Conclusions

Many educators have long had faith in the value of homework. Often, it still serves important purposes. How successful an assignment will be, however, depends upon the factors I have outlined. The way in which these factors interact with an individual student's personality as a learner can help determine whether homework will improve his or her level of success. **PL**

Yorktown Homework Guidelines

These are the basic homework guidelines created by Yorktown High School. Each department has also created specific guidelines of its own.

- Homework at Yorktown is expected to be relevant, meaningful, and reasonable in length.
- Parents can be most helpful by creating the best home environment possible in which a student can work independently. You should also help your child budget time for homework on a daily basis.
- Homework is for students. They should be able to complete short-term and long-term assignments on their own.
- We do not believe in assigning homework as a punishment.
- The typical student can have an average of two to three hours of homework per evening. This includes time to complete that evening's assignments AND to study, read, and review class notes. Actual homework time will also vary depending upon the nature of a student's schedule.