

Instruction

Homework

The Westport Board of Education considers homework to be a valuable and necessary part of the educational process, appropriate for all subject areas, not just those traditionally considered “academic.” This position is based on the beliefs that:

- Education is a continuous process that takes place out of school as well as in school. Homework promotes a wide range of interests, encourages creativity, fosters increasing independence and supports the development of good work habits.
- Homework can reinforce skills and content taught in school. Through their reading of assigned material, e.g. for social studies or language arts, students may acquire additional knowledge as well as prepare for class discussion.
- Homework can be a time for quiet immersion in intellectual pursuits, for self-discovery, and for the pleasure of independent learning, thus preparing students for further education and future careers.

In support of its position, the Board sets forth the following policies:

1. A broad definition of "homework" includes not only written work or other assignments clearly academic in nature, but also related activities such as viewing a specific TV program, reading the newspapers or periodicals, talking to people about particular topics, news reporting, collecting material for use in class, reading for pleasure and other activities which are related to the classroom work but assigned to be done out of the classroom.
2. The quantity of homework and the nature of the assignments should support the curriculum, be appropriate to the children's ages and reflect teachers' judgment of their students' needs and abilities. Therefore, the amount of homework assigned is to gradually increase as students progress through the grades, reflecting the increasing demands of the program, and facilitating transition to higher levels.
3. Parents as well as teachers have an important role in children's education, and homework can be a vital link between home and school. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to find ways to involve parents in their children's work, referring to the suggested “Role of Parents,” attached.
4. It is the responsibility of each school to communicate to parents the school's expectations with regard to homework, and of teachers to inform students and parents of the homework requirements of specific courses.
5. No matter how carefully teachers may plan homework assignments, they face the issue of individual differences among children in ability, in work habits, and, particularly with younger students, in stamina. Therefore, the Board encourages teachers and parents to communicate with one another freely when children seem to be spending too little time on homework – or too much.
6. Schools are expected to refer to the administrative guidelines, and suggestions for parents and students attached, as they implement this policy.

Policy adopted: 1965

Policy revised: 2000

General Homework Guidelines:

The quality of homework and the nature of the assignments should support the curriculum, be appropriate to the children's ages and reflect teachers' judgment of their students' needs and abilities.

High-quality homework:

- Motivates and engages students
- Promotes agency for students to initiate, strategize, and problem-solve
- Offers real-life authentic transfer of skills and concepts students are learning in school
- Reflects the various abilities, interests, and learning styles
- Provides students with feedback that is immediate, task-based, and results in improvement
- Provides parents with information about learning

The following guidelines have been developed for homework at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Homework Guidelines for the Elementary Schools:

All children benefit from time spent reading outside of school to increase comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary acquisition, as well as to grow a self-developed reading life, positive attitudes towards reading, and highly functional reading habits. This is the emphasis of homework at the elementary grades.

Daily Homework - Monday through Thursday:

Kindergarten & Grade 1	Students are encouraged to read to, with, and by a family member
Grade 2	Approximately 20 minutes per day
Grade 3*	Approximately 30 minutes per day
Grade 4*	Approximately 40 minutes per day
Grade 5*	Approximately 50 minutes per day

The time for homework in each grade represents an average. We must recognize that different children work at different rates of speed and some nights may be more and some may be less. We recognize that some children may adhere to a different pattern of reading that works for them. The goal is to inspire the joy of time spent engaged in a book.

*Students in grades 3 through 5 should practice playing their instruments regularly to reinforce music and note reading skills.

Next day homework assignments are not given on weekends, holidays, or during school vacations.

Parents can help by:

- Providing a supportive environment and time for homework.
- Assisting with organization, planning, and time management.
- Encouraging their children to ask for help when necessary.
- Contacting their child's teacher if they feel their child is spending too much or not enough time on homework.

Homework Guidelines for the Middle Schools:

Daily Homework

NOTE: These time allotments are based on a typical school night; exceptions will occur and individual circumstances may warrant additional time.

Grade 6	Average 60 minutes per day; additional daily reading strongly encouraged
Grade 7	Average 70 minutes per day; additional daily reading strongly encouraged
Grade 8	Average 80 minutes per day, additional daily reading strongly encouraged

Next day homework assignments are not given on holidays or during school vacations.

Students will:

- Keep track of their assignments in a systematic way.
- Manage their time in a way that allows for successful homework completion.
- Advocate for their individual needs and ask for help when necessary.
- Complete homework after absences within a reasonable and agreed upon amount of time as determined by the classroom teacher and student.

Teachers will:

- Clearly communicate directions, expectations, and due dates for homework and post online in a timely manner.
- Articulate the purpose for homework assignments.
- Inform students what kind of feedback will be received and return that feedback within a timeframe communicated with students.
- Provide students with additional support on homework assignments, if students request assistance and additional support can be provided (i.e. conferencing with a student on a writing assignment.)

Parents will:

- Provide a supportive environment and time for homework.
- Encourage their children to ask for help when necessary.
- Encourage students to communicate with their teachers regarding issues of homework.
- Contact their child's teacher if they feel their child is spending too much or not enough time on homework.
- Make sure that homework authentically reflects the work of the student and allows the teacher to assess the student's actual level of skill (knowledge, mastery, progress.)

Homework Guidelines for Staples High School:

In high school, students should expect to spend between 90 minutes to two hours on homework nightly. A student's chosen course of study will determine the amount of time the student spends on homework each day. Students should consider that a course of study consisting of multiple advance level courses could increase their homework load beyond two hours.

Next day homework assignments are not given on holidays or during school vacations.

Students will:

- Keep track of their assignments in a systematic way.
- Manage their time in a way that allows for successful homework completion.
- Advocate for their individual needs and ask for help when necessary.
- Communicate with the teacher proactively and in a timely manner when struggling with material or anticipating an issue with a due date.
- Reach out to teacher, counselor, or other support staff if homework becomes overwhelming.
- Complete homework after absences within a reasonable and agreed upon amount of time as determined by the classroom teacher and student.
- Adhere to the spirit and requirements of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Teachers will:

- Clearly communicate directions, expectations, and due dates for homework and post in a timely manner.
- Articulate the purpose for homework assignments.
- Inform students what kind of feedback will be received and return that feedback within a timeframe communicated with students.
- Provide students with additional support on homework assignments, if students request assistance and additional support can be provided (i.e. conferencing with a student on a writing assignment.)
- Guide students to understand how the Academic Integrity Policy applies to the work in their class.

Parents will:

- Provide a supportive environment and time for homework.
- Encourage their children to ask for help when necessary.
- Empower students to communicate with their teachers directly regarding issues of homework.
- Make sure that homework authentically reflects the work of the student and allows the teacher to assess the student's actual level of skill (knowledge, mastery, progress.)
- Communicate with their child about the make-up plan and timelines, after their child's absence. If necessary, parents can contact teachers directly to follow-up.
- Support students in adhering to the spirit and requirements of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Make-Up Work After Absence

1. When a child's excused absence extends beyond three consecutive days, special homework will be provided if requested or necessary. Parents may arrange for special homework by notifying the child's teacher of the need. When the work is ready, parents may pick it up at the school office or it may be delivered through other means.
2. In accordance with State law, in cases of extended absence due to illness or injury, the school will provide instruction at home according to Board policy.
3. Children with unexcused absences for no more than three consecutive days will usually not be given special homework, but will instead receive help from their teacher upon their return to school either in class or before or after the school day, at the teacher's discretion. They will be given time to make up work (e.g. homework, tests, etc.)
4. Extended unexcused absences for family vacations, etc.

Parents should give teachers timely notice of the need for work. Teachers are not required to devise special assignments or projects; however, children may be given the assignments that the teacher has already scheduled, if possible and appropriate to the situation. Teachers may also make suggestions to parents about appropriate activities for children on vacation. In some instances, children may be given textbooks to take on vacation, and children may check books out of the school library.

Children are not penalized by the school for absences due to family vacations. That is, they are not given zeros for work missed. Depending upon the teacher's judgment of the value of make-up, either they are not required to make up specific tests or projects, or, they are given time to complete the projects and are permitted to make up the tests after an appropriate time. If, as a result of such absences, a child needs extra help, teachers are not required to provide it on their own time. If special tutoring is needed as a result of elective absence, any cost incurred is the responsibility of the parents, not the school.

Homework and Tests

Students involved in religious observance or family celebrations on some holidays may not have the time to do schoolwork assigned specifically over the holiday period, or to study for a test scheduled for the very next day. Tests should never be scheduled on, or the day after, any date listed on the "Holidays to Avoid" list (distributed each school year.) When assignments are unavoidable, students observing the holidays are to be given the opportunity to make up homework. If there are individual circumstances related to homework or tests and religious observances or other legitimate absences, students or families should contact the teacher(s) to develop a plan for these instances. All students should be required to do all assigned work, but no student should be penalized for religious observances.

Note: The homework caveat need not apply to assignments given many weeks in advance. During any lengthy period, many students encounter diversions due to family obligations, temporary illness, extra-curricular activities, and after school jobs, as well as religious observances. It is appropriate to expect students to plan ahead, so that they can complete their work on time despite those other demands.

Regulation approved: 2000

Regulation revised: 2017

6154 Appendix A

Homework/Make-up Work

Role of Parents - Suggested Guidelines

The attitude of parents toward their children's school work and assignments is extremely important. Parents who are interested in their child's school work and who have taught the child a respect for education and the value of education in our society, do much to develop a child's positive attitude toward school and study. Parents can help children see that education is a continuous process and that learning is not limited to the classroom. Parents and schools should be partners in educating children and each should communicate with the other with regard to homework as with other educational issues.

- Education should have a very high priority in a child's life. Therefore, when planning after-school activities, parents should be sure that the child is not so tightly scheduled that there is not sufficient time left for study and homework.
- In monitoring homework, parents should encourage children to write down their assignments in a notebook or on a sheet specifically kept for that purpose.
- Parents should provide children with a proper place to study, one where they can be free from interruption.
- They should arrange a schedule for study and help the child stick to it by not making conflicting demands on the youngster's time.
- They should show an interest in what their child is doing and treat the child's efforts with respect.
- Parents may help with homework. One important role for parents is helping their children with organization, planning and time management. This should help to avoid situations where children have an excessive amount of work to do in a short period of time. Parents should think of this as a transitional role and become less involved with the child's time management etc., as the child grows older and becomes increasingly independent.

Parents may also discuss ideas with students, talk to them about what they are reading and the skills they are learning, help them with the selection of topics and in other ways be intellectually involved with the child. However, the parent should never do the work for the child, and should be certain that no one else does, either. In this way, parents can help their children develop pride in their own work and confidence in their own abilities.

- Individual differences in students' ability, motivation and stamina may affect the amount of time children spend on homework. Parents should consult with the teacher if the child does not understand the process or assignments, or if the child seems to be spending either too much time on homework or too little.

6154 Appendix B

Homework/Make-up Work

Role of the Student

Homework is an integral part of the school program; it can reinforce student skills and provide an opportunity for individual creative endeavor.

- Students should make school their first priority. They should organize their after-school activities so as to leave time for their homework and for regular study each week.
- Students should keep track of assignments in a systematic way. Having a special notebook or pad can be very helpful.
- Students should develop a timeline when working on a long-term project or paper and stick to it. They should not do assignments at the last minute.
- Students should not hesitate to get help with an assignment if there is something they don't understand, but they should not let anyone do the work for them.
- They should not wait until just before a long-term project is due, if they need help from the teacher.
- Students should take pride in their own work. They should complete all assignments neatly and hand them in on time.

