

The Whitefish Bay School District



An Exceptional Place To Learn

# School District of Whitefish Bay Homework Policy

One of the goals of the District Focus Plan is to ensure that all students develop effective strategies for continuous learning. This includes attention to how homework contributes to learning. In the spring of 2004, the Whitefish Bay School Board approved a revised homework policy to better align the district's existing policy to the focus plan goal. In developing the new policy, model policies from across the nation were reviewed, a literature review was conducted by the district's Curriculum Evaluation Council, and nearly 200 parents and 600 students were surveyed around the topic of homework.

Through this review, several facts were revealed. Each of these elements were given serious consideration in designing the revised homework policy and guidelines:

- Quality of assignments have greater impact for learning than quantity of assignments.
- There is a relationship between quality assignment design and student completion rates.
- Feedback is an essential component in the learning process when homework is assigned.
- More effective policies articulate expectations for teachers, students, parents and administrators in ensuring homework is meaningful.

The full policy and guidelines are printed on the back of this document.

 Roles and Responsibilities for Students and Parents  
The policy articulates expectations for students, parents, teachers and administrators to make homework meaningful for students.

Expectations for parents are as follows:

- Promote a positive attitude toward homework as part of the learning process.
- Understand and reinforce expectations for the quality of student work.
- Provide structure, a place, and resources needed to help students complete homework.
- Provide supervision and support, but do not do the assignment or project for the student.
- Support the need for balance among the many learning activities in the life of a student, including homework.

Expectations for students are as follows:

- Set a time each day to do homework.
- Complete homework assignments. Check work for quality and accuracy.
- If possible, explain the work that has been done to an adult.
- Ask questions of your teacher if procedures for assignments or the actual content of assignments are not clear.
- Plan ahead to make efficient use of the time that has been allotted to complete long term assignments.

Questions about this policy? Contact Laura Myrah, Director of Instruction at 963-3927

## School District of Whitefish Bay Homework Policy and Guidelines

### HOMEWORK POLICY (345.3 Policy)

Homework is an assignment given for study, preparation, or completion outside of regular class time. The primary purpose of homework is to reinforce, enrich, and/or extend learning and help students practice or extend the development of important skills and understanding of important content and concepts. Additionally, homework is intended to help students work in an increasingly self-directed manner; learn to manage time; and develop responsibility.

Homework is a valid, desirable, and expected extension of classroom learning under the following conditions:

- Learning objectives are clear so that students know the purpose of the assignment and how it relates to specific standards and benchmarks.
- There is essential practice or extension of needed skills and concepts.
- The homework is within the capabilities of the student.
- The student has adequate resources and materials with which to complete the assignment.
- The homework provides an opportunity for timely, developmental feedback to the learner.

### Teachers' Role and Responsibilities

- Know the purpose of each homework assignment and how it relates to specific standards and benchmarks.
- Minimize the need for parental participation in completion of homework by giving assignments that are aligned with the student's current learning needs and require accessible materials and resources.
- Follow the Board's guidelines for the amount of time designated for homework.
- Communicate criteria for quality to students in advance of the assignment.
- Post all assignments and provide time for students to record them.
- Review homework and provide feedback to students in a timely manner.
- Notify parents when a student's consistent inability to fulfill his or her "Role and Responsibilities" for homework interferes with his or her learning.
- Support the need for balance among the many learning activities in the life of a student besides homework.

### Students' Role and Responsibilities

- Set a time each day to do homework.
- Complete homework assignments. Check work for quality and accuracy. If possible, explain the work that has been done to an adult.
- Ask questions of your teacher if procedures for assignments or the actual content of assignments are not clear.
- Plan ahead to make efficient use of the time that has been allotted to complete long term assignments.

### Parents' Role and Responsibilities

- Promote a positive attitude toward homework as part of the learning process.
- Understand and reinforce expectations for the quality of student work.
- Provide structure, a place, and resources needed to help students complete homework.

- Provide supervision and support, but do not do the assignment or project for the student.
- Support the need for balance among the many learning activities in the life of a student including homework.

### Administrators' Role and Responsibilities

- Ensure that homework is consistent with the educational goals of the School District of Whitefish Bay.
- Facilitate communication among teacher teams concerning homework.
- Monitor and support teachers in the implementation of the district homework policy and guidelines into their classroom policy and practice.
- Be aware of the assignment of major projects and their impact on the student's overall educational program.
- Support the need for balance among the many learning activities in the life of a student besides homework.

### HOMEWORK GUIDELINES (345.3 Rule)

#### Assignment design and student practice

Student practice can take a variety of forms. Traditionally, assignments may ask students to solve mathematics problems, respond to comprehension questions from a textbook, or memorize lists of events and dates. Recent research shows that students derive additional benefit from assignments that require students to construct new knowledge, engage in disciplined inquiry, and complete tasks or solve problems that have value beyond school.

- Construction of Knowledge: Assignments that ask students to organize, interpret, evaluate or synthesize knowledge or to solve new problems.
- Disciplined Inquiry: Students use prior knowledge and critical thinking skills to articulate new understanding through elaborated communication using verbal, symbolic, written or visual explanations, justifications or dialogue.
- Value Beyond School: The new understanding is applied or articulated in a way that has value and meaning to a community or culture beyond the student and teacher.

In creating quality assignments that develop student skills and understanding, care should be taken to ensure an appropriate balance between repetitive practice of skills and application of those skills for authentic purposes.

#### Feedback

Feedback is one of the most important components of the learning process. Developmental feedback helps the learner identify specific opportunities for growth by clarifying the current performance, the desired performance, and a strategy for closing the gap between the two. Additionally, the sooner feedback occurs in relation to a performance, the more likely it is to have an impact on the learner.

#### Challenge and Support

While all assignments should be aligned to a developmentally appropriate sequence of quality instructional opportunities, it is important that students and parents/guardians alike understand that effort, patience, challenge, discovery - and occasionally, frustration - contribute to the learning process. It is important for teachers to understand that learners make the greatest

progress when they believe they have been given an appropriately challenging task with an appropriate level of support.

### Grades 1-5

Students in grade one may be asked to engage in short mathematics and reading assignments. Additionally, students should be encouraged to participate in self-selected, independent reading at home. Students may occasionally be asked to bring objects, articles, or news reports related to a classroom activity or project.

Homework gradually increases from grade two to grade five. Homework may consist of, but is not limited to, such things as continuing an assignment which may not have been completed in class, solving mathematics problems and developing number sense, independent reading, simple research, or projects. In general, collective time for these assignments may take as little as 20 minutes in grade two, and up to one (1) hour by grade five. Special care should be taken in considering and differentiating for individual needs and abilities of students while using reasonable time limits appropriate to the age/grade level of the child.

### Middle School

Homework should be a normal and natural extension of the classroom lesson and curricular goals in both academic and special areas. It may provide for, but is not limited to, such things as: continuation of an assignment not completed in class; reinforcement and application of skills or concepts; opportunities for independent study or research.

In general, an assignment for a given course should not take longer than 20 to 30 minutes, with the collective time for all courses typically not exceeding two (2) hours per evening. Attention should be given to such factors as individual needs of the student, and adjustments in homework content and duration should be made as needed to meet individual needs. Since both short and long-term assignments may be given, teachers will use the team preparation time to consult with colleagues so that expectations for long-term assignments will be manageable for students in the middle school program.

### High School

It is a general expectation that high school students will have homework in most or all of their courses, and homework should be expected on a daily basis. Homework is considered an extension of classroom instruction; it is not work required for its own sake. The type of homework will vary widely across subject areas, and should be considered of equal importance regardless of the nature of the assignment or subject.

Homework assignments should be within the knowledge and ability level of the student, yet should also provide meaningful challenge.

While there is no established guideline for the amount of time that should be devoted to homework at this level, it is noted that Whitefish Bay High School students spend an average of three to three and one-half (3-3½) hours on daily homework assignments, with about two (2) hours of that being completed outside of school hours.