

Putting the “home” in Homework

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We are already 6 weeks into the school year, half way through the trimester, and conferences are right around the corner. The vast majority of students have transitioned well into their new grade and for some, into a new building. The allure of a new school year has worn off, and for some students, this is about the time that complacency and lack of motivation begin to reveal themselves once again. This is when missing assignments and poor test scores may start occurring more frequently.

Conferences are an opportune time to meet with your student’s teachers and get a full picture of how he/she is doing thus far. By coming to conferences you are sending the message to your student that school is important and that their education is a priority to you. If you should leave conferences somewhat underwhelmed, there are some things you can do at home to increase your student’s success.

First, establish a routine.

- Start by discussing the best time to do homework. Does your child need downtime before starting homework, or does he prefer getting it done right after school?
- Try different homework conditions. Some students work better in silence, others with background noise.
- Make homework a daily event. Even on the days where they have no homework, use the time to study for a test or work on a long-term assignment.
- Utilize the planner! Make sure your student is utilizing it in the most effective manner (i.e. not just writing down what they did and then never looking at it again). Stress the importance of looking at it each day and bringing home the appropriate materials.

Second, provide support. To get the most of homework, your child needs to complete the work himself. Resist the urge to leap in and solve problems for him. Instead, use these ideas for supporting his efforts:

- Make sure they understand the directions. Encourage rereading them. Did he/she follow them correctly?
- Rather than answering their question, you could say, “let’s read this paragraph together and see if you can spot it.”
- Discuss a plan for tackling his work. He might do harder assignments first and save easier ones for later. Or he might start with his least favorite subject and save the best for last.
- Help your child break large projects into smaller chunks.

Third, keep it interesting. Your child may never love homework, but there are ways to make it more enjoyable. Try these:

- Encourage your student to start a homework group. Having friends around will make homework more fun, and they’ll learn more too. Quizzing each other and explaining material helps children remember facts.
- Involve the whole family with games like “Jeopardy.”
- Encourage your student to take breaks, especially when it involves long or tough assignments. He might work for 30 minutes and then take a 10 minute break.

Ultimately, we want all students to be successful. It comes easier for some and more difficult for others. My best advice is to seek help early. Take advantage of the great teachers, counselors, and administration we are fortunate to have in this district. Together we will do great things!

Homework suggestions adapted from: Middle Years Copyright 2011 Resources for Educators