

Homework Guidelines

The purpose of the homework guidelines is to promote a district-wide, consistent approach to utilizing homework in the instructional process. Guided by professional literature, teachers input, and a teacher/administrative review committee, these guidelines are intended to focus on the responsibilities of the teachers, students, and parents in the meaningful, appropriate use of homework at various levels and for various disciplines throughout the system.

Philosophy:

The West Allegheny School District strongly believes that homework is an integral part of the educational program and should reflect student needs, capabilities and/or interests. Homework reinforces the school curriculum, compliments program objectives, and relates to Pennsylvania Standards. It is essential since it provides opportunities for students: to prepare for, review, practice, apply, retain, integrate, enrich, and extend skills and concepts related to school learning; to reinforce independent work study skills; to effectively use school and community resources; and to develop self-discipline. There is a direct correlation between academic success and completion of assignments.

The District defines homework as assignments to be completed at home. These assignments are an extension of the classroom learning environment, serve as independent practice, and can include (but are not limited to) computation and problem solving, projects, essays, researching, writing notes, studying, reports, journal responses, lab reports, and the reading of narrative and informational text. Although homework is not graded for accuracy, points can be assigned for the completion of the assignment. The exception to the non-grading of homework occurs when long term projects are completed at home or prior teacher notice for the grading of the assignment is provided. Homework not completed as a result of an excused absence may be made up in a reasonable amount of time. Homework should never be used as a punishment for student misconduct.

Teachers, students, and parents have a responsibility for promoting the effective use of homework assignments. The teacher is responsible for assigning homework according to the District guidelines; the student is responsible for completing assignments according to the teacher's established criteria; and the parent is responsible for providing the work area, time, and conditions necessary for the student to successfully complete the homework assignments.

Purposes of Homework:

Homework prepares students for classroom instruction and acts as a stimulus for new learning. It enhances classroom instruction through the practice, application, and reinforcement of learning in order to extend knowledge and skills. It also assists students in understanding and reviewing classwork, improves the understanding of key curricular skills and concepts, and assesses if these skills and concepts have been mastered.

Completion of assignments helps students to develop good study skills, work habits, and research skills by promoting personal responsibility, time management, and independent thinking. It develops critical thinking skills, enables higher level of thinking, and fosters creativity. Homework also provides opportunities for parents to become an integral part of their child's daily learning and promotes communication between the school and home.

Homework Time Guidelines:

Homework time guidelines for various grade levels include the following ranges:

- Grades K-2 should not exceed 10-20 minutes per day
- Grades 3-4 should not exceed 45 minutes per day
- Grades 5-6 should not exceed 70 minutes per day
- Grades 7-9 should not exceed 1.5 hours per day
- Grades 10-12 should not exceed 2 hours per day

Factors Related to Homework Time Guidelines:

- Test preparation counts as homework time with regard to total time assigned.
- Students have additional commitments which require their time and attention away from the school setting.
- Student time spent on homework should be focused and on task.
- A student's program of study, skill level, and/or study habits should be reviewed should a student consistently spend 50% more time than the recommended number of minutes on homework.
- Honors and Advanced Placement courses are considered college level courses and may require more homework completion time than provided in guidelines, however, every effort should be made to adhere to District time guidelines.
- Discretion should be used when routine assignments are made for completion over extended holidays and weekends, especially weekends when school functions are planned.
- For students with special educational needs, assignments should be based on student needs and the identified IEP goals and could be adjusted in order to address specific student learning styles.
- Every reasonable effort should be made to provide students with the skills necessary to complete assignments independently.

Management of Homework Demands:

The consistent implementation of the homework guidelines is achieved through the collaborative efforts of the involved stakeholders and addresses the following responsibilities:

- **District Responsibilities:**
 - Provide for a periodic, systematic review of the District philosophy and guidelines.
 - Provide relevant research and review of literature on homework issues and trends.
 - Provide support for the practices and procedures adopted by the District.

- **Principal Responsibilities:**
 - Review the homework policy and guidelines with teachers, parents, and students through meetings and professional staff, parent, and student handbooks.
 - Regularly review homework practices and procedures by teachers for consistent implementation across the grade levels.

- **Teacher Responsibilities:**
 - Assign homework consistent with District policy and guidelines.
 - Inform students of short- and long-term goals of assignments.
 - Notify parents when homework assignments have a negative effect on student grades.
 - Establish well-defined consequences in alignment with the classroom assertive discipline plan for not completing assignments and share plan with the building administrator, parents, and students.
 - Provide students with adequate directions including the purposes and procedures for each assignment.
 - Provide procedures for students to complete missed assignments.
 - Provide feedback related to student completion of assignments.
 - Inform and/or involve the librarian and/or technology coordinator regarding assignments that require research and collection of data.
 - Routinely collaborate with teaching teams/departments through meetings, calendars, and written and electronic correspondence in order to coordinate overall student homework load and test administration.
 - NOTE: No more than 2 tests/quizzes/projects should be assigned on the same day in order to control the workload of students with different teachers for different subjects.

- **Student Responsibilities:**
 - Become familiar with the District homework philosophy, guidelines, and expectations.
 - Manage time to complete assignments.
 - Complete missed assignments as required by the teacher.
 - Ask for further explanation if original directions are not completely understood or if help in the completion of the assignment is required.

- **Parent Responsibilities:**

- Become familiar with the District homework philosophy, guidelines, and expectations.
- Provide feedback to the school regarding problems related to homework progress, difficulty, and time spent.
- Provide an appropriate work environment and the time necessary for completion of assignments.
- Encourage and support children to fulfill their homework responsibilities.

Additional Support to Assist Students in Successful Completion of Homework:

Successful completion of homework assignments is enhanced through the offering of the homework resources listed below. Teachers are advised to encourage the use of these additional resources if offered in their respective buildings to maximize student success.