

Comstock Public Schools
Board of Education

District-wide Homework Philosophy and Recommended Practice

It is the philosophy of the Comstock Board of Education that meaningful homework, given consistently in reasonable amounts, improves the learning process, helps form good work habits and increases student confidence. Considerable research exists which shows the positive relationship between homework and academic performance (see attachment). Assigned homework is most meaningful if it has a direct relationship to what is studied and is specifically given with purpose. This document establishes Board recommendations and standards regarding homework in the Comstock School District.

1. Practices should be school wide, consistent at grade levels and consistent with district policy.
2. It is recommended that the buildings homework policy be made available to all who request it. In addition it should be published in any handbook and/or syllabi and presented to students to assure parents and students are aware of the expectations of the students in regard to homework.
3. It is recommended that homework have, at the top of the page, information regarding the assignment's purpose.
 - a. The subject and topic covered (*What it is!*)
 - b. A written goal for the assignment that can be understood by parents and students. (*Why it is important!*)
 - c. All homework should have identified the resources the teacher expects to be used for completion. (*Where the supporting information can be found!*)
 - d. An estimated time for completion so students can judge their abilities in the area covered by the homework. (*How much!*)
 - i. A line for students to enter the actual time for completion. (teachers and students know where they are struggling)

EXAMPLE

Math: Reduction of fractions

Goal: To improve your skill and speed at reducing fractions to their Lowest Common Denominator (LCD) through practice.

Resource: Textbook

Expected time: 30 minutes Your time:

4. It is recommended that all homework be graded and returned to the student in a reasonable time frame.
5. Homework should start at the early elementary level to form good work habits and consistently grow in time commitment as the student advances through the grades. Combined assignments should follow “best practice recommendations as indicated below.
 - a. Follow best practice it is suggested a reasonable guideline

i) 1 to 3 assignments/week @15 minutes or less (1/4-3/4 hr./wk.)	grade 1-3
ii) 2 to 4 assignments/week @15-45 minutes (3/4-2.5 hr./wk.)	grades 4-5
iii) 3 to 5 assignments/week @ 45-75 minutes (2.5-5 hr./wk.)	grades 6-8
iv) 4 to 5 assignments/week @ 75-120 minutes (5-10 hr./wk.)	grades 9-12
6. It is recommended that a web based posting system be used for posting homework schedules for individual classes (Infinite Campus?).
 - a. To allow teachers within a school to coordinate assignments to assure students are not overburdened any one night of the week. (balance for students)
 - b. The posting would shows all homework associated with the particular class /subject in a given grading period. (available to parents, students and teachers)
 - c. The goal would be to meet the recommended practice guidelines.(allow teachers to look back to see in-total)

Attachment: Select published articles regarding homework

- (1) Good homework policy by Nancy Protherone: *“Good homework Policy = Good teaching; This article provides a good overview of benefits of homework, some of the issues and the practices and policies that should be used.*
- (2) Homework research gives insight to improving teaching practice by Richard W. Herrig: *This article provides some guidelines that are worth looking at.*
- (3) Focus on effectiveness: *This article provides good insight into the value of homework as well as guidance on implementation.*
- (4) Do students have too much homework? This article gives some historical background as well as the actual numbers of how much homework is given. Lots of tables etc. Sites studies.

The benefits: (Numbers in parentheses indicate article)

- 1) Educators should look more broadly at benefits of homework that ultimately impact student learning (1)
 - a) Long term benefits such as study habits and skills
 - b) Non-academic benefits including greater self-direction
 - c) Greater parental appreciation and involvement in schooling
- 2) The need to design effective homework practices reside at the core of improving student achievement. (2)
- 3) Current prevailing thought is homework, constructed purposefully, can enhance student learning and positively impact student achievement (2)
- 4) Generally consistent evidence for positive influence of homework on achievement (1)

- 5) Typically, the correlation between homework and achievement appears to be stronger in grades 7-12 than in K-6 (1)
- 6) Homework positively influence student achievement in elementary and high schools (2)
- 7) Fifty studies correlating homework with student achievement (2)
 - a) 43 showed students who did homework had better achievement
- 8) Generally, the positive effect homework has on achievement appears to be almost nil at the elementary levels, increasing slightly for upper elementary and middle school with having the greatest impact on high school students. (2)
- 9) Homework is positively associated with student learning. (4)
- 10) Research shows the relationship with homework and achievement positive for both middle and high schools and neutral for elementary. (4)

Some issues (Numbers in parentheses indicate article)

- 11) Homework practices of teachers vary in quality. (1)

Some apply best practice standards, Some make it too difficult, Some collect it without providing feedback.
- 12) Teacher feedback on homework has a powerful positive effect on student learning (1)
- 13) Of parents who favor a change, more would increase, rather than decrease, the amount of homework.
- 14) Two thirds of college-bound high school seniors have no more than 1 hour per night of homework and none on weekends. (*RBH-How well have we then prepared them for college which requires about 4-5 hours per night minimum*)

Dispelling rumors (Numbers in parentheses indicate article)

- 15) Regarding articles in the news media about a homework backlash. "Almost everything in these stories is wrong" (4)
- 16) NAEP data hints that student homework loads are light with only 1/3 of 17 year olds having an hour or more of daily homework.
- 17) Of twenty nations the US ranked next to the bottom on required homework.

Two thirds of college-bound high school seniors have no more than 1 hour per night of homework and none on weekends.
- 18) The most reliable data supports the following (4)
 - a) The typical student, even in HS does not spend more than 1 hr./day on homework
 - b) More parents would like to see the homework load increased than parents who would desire it be decreased.
- 19) Excessive homework is not a common problem (4)
- 20) Studying in general ranks quite low on the list of activities that absorb children's time at home and near the bottom of things that occupy their time (4)
 - a) Studying ranks next to "passive leisure" (board games etc.)
 - b) Way more time with television and personal care.

Things to consider (Numbers in parentheses indicate article)

- 21) Homework, to be effective and to support learning should possess the following (2)
 - a) Purpose: Assigning homework practice, elaboration or preparation
 - b) Efficiency: Showing evidence of learning and good use of time

- c) Ownership: Customize tasks to fit students learning styles and interests
 - d) Competence: Differentiate assignments to ensure student success
 - e) Aesthetic appeal: Structure homework to appear appealing
- 22) The prevailing conclusions and recommendations for homework include (2):
- a) Create support structures for homework including journals that help students organize assignments and provide communication
 - b) Effective homework allows space for students to take notes, organize thoughts and show work.
 - c) Homework that is imbedded in the same book as the instructional lesson creates a support structure by offering point-of-use help.
 - d) Districts and Schools should establish CLEAR policies regarding the use of homework.
 - e) Time limit recommendations should involve consideration of student development level, and grade level
 - f) Recommendation by the NPTA and NEA
 - i) 10-20 minutes/day K-2
 - ii) 30-60 minutes/day 3-6
 - g) Cooper (1994,2000) suggests
 - i) 1 to 3 assignments/week @15 minutes or less grade 1-3
 - ii) 2 to 4 assignments/week @15-45 minutes grades 4-6
 - iii) 3 to 5 assignments/week @ 45-75 minutes grades 7-9
 - iv) 4 to 5 assignments/week @ 75-120 minutes grades 10-12
 - v) 10 minute rule
 - h) Connors (1992) recommends
 - i) Grade 5, 30-60 minutes/night
 - ii) Grade 6, 30-60 minutes /night
 - iii) Grade 7, 45-90 minutes/night
- 23) Homework should not be used to teach new material (1)
- 24) Teachers should make sure the students fully understand the concepts and possess the skills needed to complete the assignment (1)
- 25) Good practice suggestions (1)
- a) Assign homework toward the beginning of class
 - b) Explain how to do the homework
 - c) Give students time to start the homework in class
 - d) Relate the homework to classwork
 - e) Allow students to work together on homework in class
- 26) Use a schoolwide approach (1)
- Policy might define the role of homework in learning at each grade level
- 27) Policy of a Massachusetts Elementary (1)
- a) Communicate clear expectations for each assignment
 - b) Assign developmentally appropriate homework
 - c) Limit the amount of homework to allow independent reading time
 - d) Acknowledge the assignments importance with corrections and feedback
 - e) Periodically solicit feedback on difficulty and completion time
- 28) Schools should be sensitive to limitations in the home environment (1)
- 29) Some studies showed homework is more effective for math (2)
- 30) Providing appropriate homework support resources and addressing self-efficacy (effectiveness) issues appears to have a positive effect. Self-efficacy is a learning predictor of GPA (2)
- 31) Teachers assign homework at instructional levels that match student skills (2)

- 32) Assign positive consequences for homework completed (2)
- 33) Students receive timely and specific feedback beyond a checkmark or grade (2)
- 34) Consider distributed practice, focused practice over several days or weeks to enhance mastery (2)
- 35) Define parental involvement to include facilitation of homework completion, not instruction. Parents provide a consistent time and place. (2)
- 36) Homework and practice are connected (3)
 - a) Matching the planned activity to the learning goal
 - b) Focused strategy on increasing understanding
- 37) Practice means students are engaged in applying new learning, often repeatedly (3)

Effective student practice is key to student achievement
- 38) Key findings (3)
 - a) Grade level is important when assigning homework
 - i) High school for every 30 additional minutes of homework completed daily, students GPA increase up to $\frac{1}{2}$ a point
 - ii) Elementary students should be assigned homework to establish good learning and study habits.
 - b) Assign homework at instructional levels that match student's skills. Learning disabled need appropriately matched and feedback. Student achievement can vary based on feedback and positive consequences.
 - c) Students need to receive feedback on homework. Homework which has embedded instructive comments has the greatest effect on learning.
 - d) Homework provides the time and experience students need to develop study habits the support learning.
 - e) Mastery requires focused practice over days or weeks. Match the planned activity to the learning goal.
 - f) Students learn more when allowed to practice fewer skills at a deeper level
 - g) Complex processes should be broken down into smaller bits or skills
 - h) Parental involvement in homework can hinder student learning. Appropriate parental involvement facilitates homework completion.
- 39) Implementation (3)
 - a) Understand the four types of homework
 - i) Memorization of basic rules
 - ii) Increasing skill speed, improving students ability to apply skills in more complex problem solving
 - iii) Deepening understanding of a concept
 - iv) Preparation for the following day's learning
 - b) Match the right type to the goal
 - c) Assign the right level of homework
 - d) Assign the right amount of homework time
 - e) Apply consistent consequences
 - f) Recognize student uniqueness, as they practice they will incorporate the new skill into a knowledge base.
 - g) Create homework policies at the school level. Not at the classroom level
 - h) Ask parents to facilitate homework completion.
 - i) Homework should serve a clear purpose
 - j) Provide appropriate and timely feedback
 - k) Create support structures for homework